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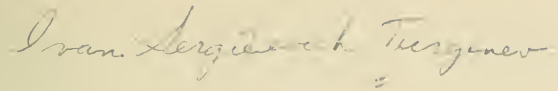

THE WORKS

OF

# IVÁN TURGÉNIEFF

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY

ISABEL F. HAPGOOD

## FIRST LOVE

AND OTHER STORIES

## THE JEW

AND OTHER STORIES

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# FIRST LOVE

(1860)

# FIRST LOVE

THE guests had long since departed. The clock had struck half-past twelve. There remained in the room only the host, Sergyéi Nikoláevitch, and Vladímir Petróvitch.

The host rang and ordered the remains of the supper to be removed.—"So then, the matter is settled,"—he said, ensconcing himself more deeply in his arm-chair, and lighting a cigar:—"each of us is to narrate the history of his first love. 'T is your turn, Sergyéi Nikoláevitch."

Sergyéi Nikoláevitch, a rather corpulent man, with a plump, fair-skinned face, first looked at the host, then raised his eyes to the ceiling.—"I had no first love,"—he began at last:—"I began straight off with the second."

"How was that?"

"Very simply. I was eighteen years of age when, for the first time, I dangled after a very charming young lady; but I courted her as though it were no new thing to me: exactly as I courted others afterward. To tell the truth, I fell in love, for the first and last time, at the age of six, with my nurse;—but that is a very long time ago. The details of our relations have been erased from my

memory; but even if I remembered them, who would be interested in them?"

"Then what are we to do?"—began the host.—"There was nothing very startling about my first love either; I never fell in love with any one before Anna Ivánovna, now my wife; and everything ran as though on oil with us; our fathers made up the match, we very promptly fell in love with each other, and entered the bonds of matrimony without delay. My story can be told in two words. I must confess, gentlemen, that in raising the question of first love, I set my hopes on you, I will not say old, but yet no longer young bachelors. Will not you divert us with something, Vladímir Petróvitch?"

"My first love belongs, as a matter of fact, not altogether to the ordinary category,"—replied, with a slight hesitation, Vladímir Petróvitch, a man of forty, whose black hair was sprinkled with grey.

"Ah!"—said the host and Sergyéi Nikoláevitch in one breath.—"So much the better. . . . Tell us."

"As you like . . . . or no: I will not narrate; I am no great hand at telling a story; it turns out dry and short, or long-drawn-out and artificial. But if you will permit me, I will write down all that I remember in a note-book, and will read it aloud to you."

At first the friends would not consent, but

Vladímir Petróvitch insisted on having his own way. A fortnight later they came together again, and Vladímir Sergyéitch kept his promise.

This is what his note-book contained.

## I

I WAS sixteen years old at the time. The affair took place in the summer of 1833.

I was living in Moscow, in my parents' house. They had hired a villa near the Kalúga barrier, opposite the Neskútchny Park.[1]—I was preparing for the university, but was working very little and was not in a hurry.

No one restricted my freedom. I had done whatever I pleased ever since I had parted with my last French governor, who was utterly unable to reconcile himself to the thought that he had fallen "like a bomb" (*comme une bombe*) into Russia, and with a stubborn expression on his face, wallowed in bed for whole days at a time. My father treated me in an indifferently-affectionate way; my mother paid hardly any attention to me, although she had no children except me: other cares engrossed her. My father, still a young man and very handsome, had married her

[1] The finest of the public parks in Moscow, situated near the famous Sparrow Hills, is called "Neskútchny"—"Not Tiresome," generally rendered "Sans Souci." It contains an imperial residence, the Alexander Palace, used as an official summer home by the Governor-General of Moscow.—TRANSLATOR.

from calculation; she was ten years older than he. My mother led a melancholy life: she was incessantly in a state of agitation, jealousy, and wrath —but not in the presence of my father; she was very much afraid of him, and he maintained a stern, cold, and distant manner. . . I have never seen a man more exquisitely calm, self-confident, and self-controlled.

I shall never forget the first weeks I spent at the villa. The weather was magnificent; we had left town the ninth of May, on St. Nicholas's day. I rambled,—sometimes in the garden of our villa, sometimes in Neskútchny Park, sometimes beyond the city barriers; I took with me some book or other,—a course of Kaidánoff,—but rarely opened it, and chiefly recited aloud poems, of which I knew a great many by heart. The blood was fermenting in me, and my heart was aching —so sweetly and absurdly; I was always waiting for something, shrinking at something, and wondering at everything, and was all ready for anything at a moment's notice. My fancy was beginning to play, and hovered swiftly ever around the selfsame image, as martins hover round a belfry at sunset. But even athwart my tears and athwart the melancholy, inspired now by a melodious verse, now by the beauty of the evening, there peered forth, like grass in springtime, the joyous sensation of young, bubbling life.

I had a saddle-horse; I was in the habit of sad-

dling it myself, and when I rode off alone as far as possible, in some direction, launching out at a gallop and fancying myself a knight at a tourney —how blithely the wind whistled in my ears!—Or, turning my face skyward, I welcomed its beaming light and azure into my open soul.

I remember, at that time, the image of woman, the phantom of woman's love, almost never entered my mind in clearly-defined outlines; but in everything I thought, in everything I felt, there lay hidden the half-conscious, shamefaced presentiment of something new, inexpressibly sweet, feminine . . . .

This presentiment, this expectation permeated my whole being; I breathed it, it coursed through my veins in every drop of blood . . . . it was fated to be speedily realised.

Our villa consisted of a wooden manor-house with columns, and two tiny outlying wings; in the wing to the left a tiny factory of cheap wall-papers was installed. . . . More than once I went thither to watch how half a score of gaunt, dishevelled young fellows in dirty smocks and with tipsy faces were incessantly galloping about at the wooden levers which jammed down the square blocks of the press, and in that manner, by the weight of their puny bodies, printed the motley-hued patterns of the wall-papers. The wing on the right stood empty and was for rent. One day—three weeks after the ninth of May—the

shutters on the windows of this wing were opened, and women's faces made their appearance in them; some family or other had moved into it. I remember how, that same day at dinner, my mother inquired of the butler who our new neighbours were, and on hearing the name of Princess Zasyékin, said at first, not without some respect: —" Ah! a Princess " . . . . and then she added:— " She must be some poor person! "

" They came in three hired carriages, ma'am," —remarked the butler, as he respectfully presented a dish. " They have no carriage of their own, ma'am, and their furniture is of the very plainest sort."

" Yes,"—returned my mother,—" and nevertheless, it is better so."

My father shot a cold glance at her; she subsided into silence.

As a matter of fact, Princess Zasyékin could not be a wealthy woman: the wing she had hired was so old and tiny and low-roofed that people in the least well-to-do would not have been willing to inhabit it.—However, I let this go in at one ear and out at the other. The princely title had little effect on me: I had recently been reading Schiller's " The Brigands."

## II

I HAD a habit of prowling about our garden every evening, gun in hand, and standing guard against the crows.—I had long cherished a hatred for those wary, rapacious and crafty birds. On the day of which I have been speaking, I went into the garden as usual, and, after having fruitlessly made the round of all the alleys (the crows recognised me from afar, and merely cawed spasmodically at a distance), I accidentally approached the low fence which separated *our* territory from the narrow strip of garden extending behind the right-hand wing and appertaining to it. I was walking along with drooping head. Suddenly I heard voices: I glanced over the fence—and was petrified. . . . . A strange spectacle presented itself to me.

A few paces distant from me, on a grass-plot between green raspberry-bushes, stood a tall, graceful young girl, in a striped, pink frock and with a white kerchief on her head; around her pressed four young men, and she was tapping them in turn on the brow with those small grey flowers, the name of which I do not know, but which are familiar to children; these little flowers form tiny sacs, and burst with a pop when they are struck against anything hard. The young men offered their foreheads to her so willingly,

and in the girl's movements (I saw her form in profile) there was something so bewitching, caressing, mocking, and charming, that I almost cried aloud in wonder and pleasure; and I believe I would have given everything in the world if those lovely little fingers had only consented to tap me on the brow. My gun slid down on the grass, I forgot everything, I devoured with my eyes that slender waist, and the neck and the beautiful arms, and the slightly ruffled fair hair, the intelligent eyes and those lashes, and the delicate cheek beneath them. . . .

"Young man, hey there, young man!"—suddenly spoke up a voice near me:—"Is it permissible to stare like that at strange young ladies?"

I trembled all over, I was stupefied. . . . . Beside me, on the other side of the fence, stood a man with closely-clipped black hair, gazing ironically at me. At that same moment, the young girl turned toward me. . . . I beheld huge grey eyes in a mobile, animated face—and this whole face suddenly began to quiver, and to laugh, and the white teeth gleamed from it, the brows elevated themselves in an amusing way. . . . I flushed, picked up my gun from the ground, and, pursued by ringing but not malicious laughter, I ran to my own room, flung myself on the bed, and covered my face with my hands. My heart was fairly leaping within me; I felt very much

ashamed and very merry: I experienced an unprecedented emotion.

After I had rested awhile, I brushed my hair, made myself neat and went down-stairs to tea. The image of the young girl floated in front of me; my heart had ceased to leap, but ached in an agreeable sort of way.

"What ails thee?"—my father suddenly asked me:—"hast thou killed a crow?"

I was on the point of telling him all, but refrained and only smiled to myself. As I was preparing for bed, I whirled round thrice on one foot, I know not why, pomaded my hair, got into bed and slept all night like a dead man. Toward morning I awoke for a moment, raised my head, cast a glance of rapture around me—and fell asleep again.

## III

"How am I to get acquainted with them?" was my first thought, as soon as I awoke in the morning. I went out into the garden before tea, but did not approach too close to the fence, and saw no one. After tea I walked several times up and down the street in front of the villa, and cast a distant glance at the windows. . . . I thought I descried *her* face behind the curtains, and retreated with all possible despatch. "But I must get acquainted,"—I thought, as I walked with ir-

regular strides up and down the sandy stretch which extends in front of the Neskútchny Park . . . . "but how? that is the question." I recalled the most trifling incidents of the meeting on the previous evening; for some reason, her manner of laughing at me presented itself to me with particular clearness. . . . But while I was fretting thus and constructing various plans, Fate was already providing for me.

During my absence, my mother had received a letter from her new neighbour on grey paper sealed with brown wax, such as is used only on postal notices, and on the corks of cheap wine. In this letter, written in illiterate language, and with a slovenly chirography, the Princess requested my mother to grant her her protection: my mother, according to the Princess's words, was well acquainted with the prominent people on whom the fortune of herself and her children depended, as she had some extremely important law-suits: "I apeal tyou,"—she wrote,—"as a knoble woman to a knoble woman, and moarover, it is agriable to me to makeus of this oportunity." In conclusion, she asked permission of my mother to call upon her. I found my mother in an unpleasant frame of mind: my father was not at home, and she had no one with whom to take counsel. It was impossible not to reply to a "knoble woman," and to a Princess into the bargain; but how to reply perplexed my mother.

It seemed to her ill-judged to write a note in French, and my mother was not strong in Russian orthography herself—and was aware of the fact—and did not wish to compromise herself. She was delighted at my arrival, and immediately ordered me to go to the Princess and explain to her verbally that my mother was always ready, to the extent of her ability, to be of service to Her Radiance,[1] and begged that she would call upon her about one o'clock.

This unexpectedly swift fulfilment of my secret wishes both delighted and frightened me; but I did not betray the emotion which held possession of me, and preliminarily betook myself to my room for the purpose of donning a new neckcloth and coat; at home I went about in a round-jacket and turn-over collars, although I detested them greatly.

## IV

In the cramped and dirty anteroom of the wing, which I entered with an involuntary trembling of my whole body, I was received by a grey-haired old serving-man with a face the hue of dark copper, pig-like, surly little eyes, and such deep wrinkles on his forehead as I had never seen before in my life. He was carrying on a platter the

[1] Princes, princesses, counts, and countesses have the title of *Siyátelstvo* (*siyám*—to shine, to be radiant); generally translated "Illustrious Highness" or "Serenity."—Translator.

gnawed spinal bone of a herring, and, pushing to with his foot the door which led into the adjoining room, he said abruptly:—"What do you want?"

"Is Princess Zasyékin at home?"—I inquired.

"Vonifáty!"—screamed a quavering female voice on the other side of the door.

The servant silently turned his back on me, thereby displaying the badly-worn rear of his livery with its solitary, rusted, armouried button, and went away, leaving the platter on the floor.

"Hast thou been to the police-station?"—went on that same feminine voice. The servant muttered something in reply.—"Hey? . . . . Some one has come?"—was the next thing audible. . . . . "The young gentleman from next door? —Well, ask him in."

"Please come into the drawing-room, sir,"—said the servant, making his appearance again before me, and picking up the platter from the floor. I adjusted my attire and entered the "drawing-room."

I found myself in a tiny and not altogether clean room, with shabby furniture which seemed to have been hastily set in place. At the window, in an easy-chair with a broken arm, sat a woman of fifty, with uncovered hair [1] and plain-featured, clad in an old green gown, and with a variegated

[1] The custom still prevails in Russia, to a great extent, for all elderly women to wear caps. In the peasant class it is considered as extremely indecorous to go "simple-haired," as the expression runs. —Translator.

worsted kerchief round her neck. Her small black eyes fairly bored into me.

I went up to her and made my bow.

"I have the honour of speaking to Princess Zasyékin?"

"I am Princess Zasyékin: and you are the son of Mr. B—?"

"Yes, madam. I have come to you with a message from my mother."

"Pray be seated. Vonifáty! where are my keys? Hast thou seen them?"

I communicated to Madame Zasyékin my mother's answer to her note. She listened to me, tapping the window-pane with her thick, red fingers, and when I had finished she riveted her eyes on me once more.

"Very good; I shall certainly go,"—said she at last.—"But how young you are still! How old are you, allow me to ask?"

"Sixteen,"—I replied with involuntary hesitation.

The Princess pulled out of her pocket some dirty, written documents, raised them up to her very nose and began to sort them over.

"'T is a good age,"—she suddenly articulated, turning and fidgeting in her chair.—"And please do not stand on ceremony. We are plain folks."

"Too plain,"—I thought, with involuntary disgust taking in with a glance the whole of her homely figure.

At that moment, the other door of the drawing-room was swiftly thrown wide open, and on the threshold appeared the young girl whom I had seen in the garden the evening before. She raised her hand and a smile flitted across her face.

"And here is my daughter,"—said the Princess, pointing at her with her elbow.—"Zínotchka, the son of our neighbour, Mr. B—. What is your name, permit me to inquire?"

"Vladímir,"—I replied, rising and lisping with agitation.

"And your patronymic?"

"Petróvitch."

"Yes! I once had an acquaintance, a chief of police, whose name was Vladímir Petróvitch also. Vonifáty! don't hunt for the keys; the keys are in my pocket."

The young girl continued to gaze at me with the same smile as before, slightly puckering up her eyes and bending her head a little on one side.

"I have already seen M'sieu Voldemar,"—she began. (The silvery tone of her voice coursed through me like a sweet chill.)—"Will you permit me to call you so?"

"Pray do, madam,"—I lisped.

"Where was that?"—asked the Princess.

The young Princess did not answer her mother.

"Are you busy now?"—she said, without taking her eyes off me.

"Not in the least, madam."

"Then will you help me to wind some wool? Come hither, to me."

She nodded her head at me and left the drawing-room. I followed her.

In the room which we entered the furniture was a little better and was arranged with great taste. —But at that moment I was almost unable to notice anything; I moved as though in a dream and felt a sort of intense sensation of well-being verging on stupidity throughout my frame.

The young Princess sat down, produced a knot of red wool, and pointing me to a chair opposite her, she carefully unbound the skein and placed it on my hands. She did all this in silence, with a sort of diverting deliberation, and with the same brilliant and crafty smile on her slightly parted lips. She began to wind the wool upon a card doubled together, and suddenly illumined me with such a clear, swift glance, that I involuntarily dropped my eyes. When her eyes, which were generally half closed, opened to their full extent her face underwent a complete change; it was as though light had inundated it.

"What did you think of me yesterday, M'sieu Voldemar?"—she asked, after a brief pause.— "You certainly must have condemned me?"

"I . . . . Princess . . . . I thought nothing . . . . how can I . . . . . ." I replied, in confusion.

"Listen,"—she returned.—"You do not know

me yet; I want people always to speak the truth to me. You are sixteen, I heard, and I am twenty-one; you see that I am a great deal older than you, and therefore you must always speak the truth to me . . . and obey me,"—she added. —"Look at me; why don't you look at me?"

I became still more confused; but I raised my eyes to hers, nevertheless. She smiled, only not in her former manner, but with a different, an approving smile.—"Look at me,"—she said, caressingly lowering her voice:—"I don't like that. . . . Your face pleases me; I foresee that we shall be friends. And do you like me?"—she added slyly.

"Princess . . . ." I was beginning. . . .

"In the first place, call me Zinaída Alexándrovna; and in the second place,—what sort of a habit is it for children"—(she corrected herself) —"for young men—not to say straight out what they feel? You do like me, don't you?"

Although it was very pleasant to me to have her talk so frankly to me, still I was somewhat nettled. I wanted to show her that she was not dealing with a small boy, and, assuming as easy and serious a mien as I could, I said:—"Of course I like you very much, Zinaída Alexándrovna; I have no desire to conceal the fact."

She shook her head, pausing at intervals.— "Have you a governor?"—she suddenly inquired.

" No, I have not had a governor this long time past."

I lied: a month had not yet elapsed since I had parted with my Frenchman.

" Oh, yes, I see: you are quite grown up."

She slapped me lightly on the fingers.—" Hold your hands straight!"—And she busied herself diligently with winding her ball.

I took advantage of the fact that she did not raise her eyes, and set to scrutinising her, first by stealth, then more and more boldly. Her face seemed to me even more charming than on the day before: everything about it was so delicate, intelligent and lovely. She was sitting with her back to the window, which was hung with a white shade; a ray of sunlight making its way through that shade inundated with a flood of light her fluffy golden hair, her innocent neck, sloping shoulders, and calm, tender bosom.—I gazed at her—and how near and dear she became to me! It seemed to me both that I had known her for a long time and that I had known nothing and had not lived before she came. . . . She wore a rather dark, already shabby gown, with an apron; I believe I would willingly have caressed every fold of that gown and of that apron. The tips of her shoes peeped out from under her gown; I would have bowed down to those little boots. . . " And here I sit, in front of her,"—I thought.—" I have become acquainted with her . . . . what

happiness, my God!" I came near bouncing out of my chair with rapture, but I merely dangled my feet to and fro a little, like a child who is enjoying dainties.

I felt as much at my ease as a fish does in water, and I would have liked never to leave that room again as long as I lived.

Her eyelids slowly rose, and again her brilliant eyes beamed caressingly before me, and again she laughed.

"How you stare at me!"—she said slowly, shaking her finger at me.

I flushed scarlet. . . . . "She understands all, she sees all,"—flashed through my head. "And how could she fail to see and understand all?"

Suddenly there was a clattering in the next room, and a sword clanked.

"Zína!"—screamed the old Princess from the drawing-room.—"Byelovzóroff has brought thee a kitten."

"A kitten!"—cried Zinaída, and springing headlong from her chair, she flung the ball on my knees and ran out.

I also rose, and, laying the skein of wool on the window-sill, went into the drawing-room, and stopped short in amazement. In the centre of the room lay a kitten with outstretched paws; Zinaída was kneeling in front of it, and carefully raising its snout. By the side of the young Princess, taking up nearly the entire wall-space between the

windows, was visible a fair-complexioned, curly-haired young man, a hussar, with a rosy face and protruding eyes.

"How ridiculous!"—Zinaída kept repeating:—"and its eyes are not grey, but green, and what big ears it has! Thank you, Viktór Egóritch! you are very kind."

The hussar, in whom I recognised one of the young men whom I had seen on the preceding evening, smiled and bowed, clicking his spurs and clanking the links of his sword as he did so.

"You were pleased to say yesterday that you wished to possess a striped kitten with large ears . . . . so I have got it, madam. Your word is my law."—And again he bowed.

The kitten mewed faintly, and began to sniff at the floor.

"He is hungry!"—cried Zinaída.—"Vonifáty! Sónya! bring some milk."

The chambermaid, in an old yellow gown and with a faded kerchief on her head, entered with a saucer of milk in her hand, and placed it in front of the kitten. The kitten quivered, blinked, and began to lap.

"What a rosy tongue it has,"—remarked Zinaída, bending her head down almost to the floor, and looking sideways at it, under its very nose.

The kitten drank its fill, and began to purr, affectedly contracting and relaxing its paws. Zi-

naída rose to her feet, and turning to the maid, said indifferently:—" Take it away."

" Your hand—in return for the kitten,"—said the hussar, displaying his teeth, and bending over the whole of his huge body, tightly confined in a new uniform.

" Both hands,"—replied Zinaída, offering him her hands. While he was kissing them, she gazed at me over his shoulder.

I stood motionless on one spot, and did not know whether to laugh or to say something, or to hold my peace. Suddenly, through the open door of the anteroom, the figure of our footman, Feódor, caught my eye. He was making signs to me. I mechanically went out to him.

" What dost thou want? "—I asked.

" Your mamma has sent for you,"—he said in a whisper.—" She is angry because you do not return with an answer."

" Why, have I been here long? "

" More than an hour."

" More than an hour! "—I repeated involuntarily, and returning to the drawing-room, I began to bow and scrape my foot.

" Where are you going? "—the young Princess asked me, with a glance at the hussar.

" I must go home, madam. So I am to say,"—I added, addressing the old woman,—" that you will call upon us at two o'clock."

" Say that, my dear fellow."

The old Princess hurriedly drew out her snuff-box, and took a pinch so noisily that I fairly jumped.—"Say that,"—she repeated, tearfully blinking and grunting.

I bowed once more, turned and left the room with the same sensation of awkwardness in my back which a very young man experiences when he knows that people are staring after him.

"Look here, M'sieu Voldemar, you must drop in to see us,"—called Zinaída, and again burst out laughing.

"What makes her laugh all the time?" I thought, as I wended my way home accompanied by Feódor, who said nothing to me, but moved along disapprovingly behind me. My mother reproved me, and inquired, with surprise, "What could I have been doing so long at the Princess's?" I made her no answer, and went off to my own room. I had suddenly grown very melancholy. . . . I tried not to weep. . . . I was jealous of the hussar.

## V

The Princess, according to her promise, called on my mother, and did not please her. I was not present at their meeting, but at table my mother narrated to my father that that Princess Zasyékin seemed to her a *femme très vulgaire;* that she had bored her immensely with her requests that she

would intervene on her behalf with Prince Sergyéi; that she was always having such law-suits and affairs,—*de vilaines affaires d'argent*,—and that she must be a great rogue. But my mother added that she had invited her with her daughter to dine on the following day (on hearing the words "with her daughter," I dropped my nose into my plate),—because, notwithstanding, she was a neighbour, and with a name. Thereupon my father informed my mother that he now recalled who the lady was: that in his youth he had known the late Prince Zasyékin, a capitally-educated but flighty and captious man; that in society he was called "*le Parisien*," because of his long residence in Paris; that he had been very wealthy, but had gambled away all his property —and, no one knew why, though probably it had been for the sake of the money,—"although he might have made a better choice,"—added my father, with a cold smile,—he had married the daughter of some clerk in a chancellery, and after his marriage had gone into speculation, and ruined himself definitively.

"'T is a wonder she did not try to borrow money,"—remarked my mother.

"She is very likely to do it,"—said my father, calmly.—"Does she speak French?"

"Very badly."

"M-m-m. However, that makes no difference.

I think thou saidst that thou hadst invited her daughter; some one assured me that she is a very charming and well-educated girl."

"Ah! Then she does not take after her mother."

"Nor after her father,"—returned my father. —"He was also well educated, but stupid."

My mother sighed, and became thoughtful. My father relapsed into silence. I felt very awkward during the course of that conversation.

After dinner I betook myself to the garden, but without my gun. I had pledged my word to myself that I would not go near the "Zasyékin garden"; but an irresistible force drew me thither, and not in vain. I had no sooner approached the fence than I caught sight of Zinaída. This time she was alone. She was holding a small book in her hands and strolling slowly along the path. She did not notice me. I came near letting her slip past; but suddenly caught myself up and coughed.

She turned round but did not pause, put aside with one hand the broad blue ribbon of her round straw hat, looked at me, smiled quietly, and again riveted her eyes on her book.

I pulled off my cap, and after fidgeting about a while on one spot, I went away with a heavy heart. "*Que suis-je pour elle?*"—I thought (God knows why) in French.

Familiar footsteps resounded behind me; I glanced round and beheld my father advancing toward me with swift, rapid strides.

"Is that the young Princess?"—he asked me.

"Yes."

"Dost thou know her?"

"I saw her this morning at the Princess her mother's."

My father halted and, wheeling abruptly round on his heels, retraced his steps. As he came on a level with Zinaída he bowed courteously to her. She bowed to him in return, not without some surprise on her face, and lowered her book. I saw that she followed him with her eyes. My father always dressed very elegantly, originally and simply; but his figure had never seemed to me more graceful, never had his grey hat sat more handsomely on his curls, which were barely beginning to grow thin.

I was on the point of directing my course toward Zinaída, but she did not even look at me, but raised her book once more and walked away.

## VI

I SPENT the whole of that evening and the following day in a sort of gloomy stupor. I remember that I made an effort to work, and took up Kaidánoff; but in vain did the large-printed lines

and pages of the famous text-book flit before my eyes. Ten times in succession I read the words: "Julius Cæsar was distinguished for military daring," without understanding a word, and I flung aside my book. Before dinner I pomaded my hair again, and again donned my frock-coat and neckerchief.

"What 's that for?"—inquired my mother.—"Thou art not a student yet, and God knows whether thou wilt pass thy examination. And thy round-jacket was made not very long ago. Thou must not discard it!"

"There are to be guests,"—I whispered, almost in despair.

"What nonsense! What sort of guests are they?"

I was compelled to submit. I exchanged my coat for my round-jacket, but did not remove my neckerchief. The Princess and her daughter made their appearance half an hour before dinner; the old woman had thrown a yellow shawl over her green gown, with which I was familiar, and had donned an old-fashioned mob-cap with ribbons of a fiery hue. She immediately began to talk about her notes of hand, to sigh and to bewail her poverty, and to "importune," but did not stand in the least upon ceremony; and she took snuff noisily and fidgeted and wriggled in her chair as before. It never seemed to enter her head that she was a Princess. On the other hand,

Zinaída bore herself very stiffly, almost haughtily, like a real young Princess. Cold impassivity and dignity had made their appearance on her countenance, and I did not recognise her,—did not recognise her looks or her smile, although in this new aspect she seemed to me very beautiful. She wore a thin barège gown with pale-blue figures; her hair fell in long curls along her cheeks, in the English fashion: this coiffure suited the cold expression of her face.

My father sat beside her during dinner, and with the exquisite and imperturbable courtesy which was characteristic of him, showed attention to his neighbour. He glanced at her from time to time, and she glanced at him now and then, but in such a strange, almost hostile, manner. Their conversation proceeded in French;—I remember that I was surprised at the purity of Zinaída's accent. The old Princess, as before, did not restrain herself in the slightest degree during dinner, but ate a great deal and praised the food. My mother evidently found her wearisome, and answered her with a sort of sad indifference; my father contracted his brows in a slight frown from time to time. My mother did not like Zinaída either.

"She 's a haughty young sprig,"—she said the next day.—"And when one comes to think of it, what is there for her to be proud of?—*avec sa mine de grisette!*"

"Evidently, thou hast not seen any grisettes," —my father remarked to her.

"Of course I have n't, God be thanked! . . . . . Only, how art thou capable of judging of them?"

Zinaída paid absolutely no attention whatever to me. Soon after dinner the old Princess began to take her leave.

"I shall rely upon your protection, Márya Nikoláevna and Piótr Vasílitch,"—she said, in a sing-song tone, to my father and mother.— "What is to be done! I have seen prosperous days, but they are gone. Here am I a Radiance," —she added, with an unpleasant laugh,—"but what 's the good of an honour when you 've nothing to eat?"—My father bowed respectfully to her and escorted her to the door of the anteroom. I was standing there in my round-jacket, and staring at the floor, as though condemned to death. Zinaída's behaviour toward me had definitively annihilated me. What, then, was my amazement when, as she passed me, she whispered to me hastily, and with her former affectionate expression in her eyes:—"Come to us at eight o'clock, do you hear? without fail. . . ." I merely threw my hands apart in amazement;—but she was already retreating, having thrown a white scarf over her head.

## VII

Precisely at eight o'clock I entered the tiny wing inhabited by the Princess, clad in my coat, and with my hair brushed up into a crest on top of my head. The old servant glared surlily at me, and rose reluctantly from his bench. Merry voices resounded in the drawing-room. I opened the door and retreated a pace in astonishment. In the middle of the room, on a chair, stood the young Princess, holding a man's hat in front of her; around the chair thronged five men. They were trying to dip their hands into the hat, but she kept raising it on high and shaking it violently. On catching sight of me she exclaimed:—

"Stay, stay! Here 's a new guest; he must be given a ticket,"—and springing lightly from the chair, she seized me by the lapel of my coat.—"Come along,"—said she;—"why do you stand there? Messieurs, allow me to make you acquainted: this is Monsieur Voldemar, the son of our neighbour. And this,"—she added, turning to me, and pointing to the visitors in turn,—"is Count Malévsky, Doctor Lúshin, the poet Maidánoff, retired Captain Nirmátzky, and Byelovzóroff the hussar, whom you have already seen. I beg that you will love and favour each other."

I was so confused that I did not even bow to any one; in Doctor Lúshin I recognised that same

swarthy gentleman who had so ruthlessly put me to shame in the garden; the others were strangers to me.

"Count!"—pursued Zinaída,—"write a ticket for M'sieu Voldemar."

"That is unjust,"—returned the Count, with a slight accent,—a very handsome and foppishly-attired man, with a dark complexion, expressive brown eyes, a thin, white little nose, and a slender moustache over his tiny mouth.—"He has not been playing at forfeits with us."

"'T is unjust,"—repeated Byelovzóroff and the gentleman who had been alluded to as the retired Captain,—a man of forty, horribly pock-marked, curly-haired as a negro, round-shouldered, bow-legged, and dressed in a military coat without epaulets, worn open on the breast.

"Write a ticket, I tell you,"—repeated the Princess.—"What sort of a rebellion is this? M'sieu Voldemar is with us for the first time, and to-day no law applies to him. No grumbling—write; I will have it so."

The Count shrugged his shoulders, but submissively bowing his head, he took a pen in his white, ring-decked hand, tore off a scrap of paper and began to write on it.

"Permit me at least to explain to M'sieu Voldemar what it is all about,"—began Lúshin, in a bantering tone;—"otherwise he will be utterly at a loss. You see, young man, we are play-

ing at forfeits; the Princess must pay a fine, and the one who draws out the lucky ticket must kiss her hand. Do you understand what I have told you?"

I merely glanced at him and continued to stand as though in a fog, while the Princess again sprang upon the chair and again began to shake the hat. All reached up to her—I among the rest.

"Maidánoff,"—said the Princess to the tall young man with a gaunt face, tiny mole-like eyes and extremely long, black hair,—"you, as a poet, ought to be magnanimous and surrender your ticket to M'sieu Voldemar, so that he may have two chances instead of one."

But Maidánoff shook his head in refusal and tossed his hair. I put in my hand into the hat after all the rest, drew out and unfolded a ticket. . . . O Lord! what were my sensations when I beheld on it, "Kiss!"

"Kiss!"—I cried involuntarily.

"Bravo! He has won,"—chimed in the Princess.—"How delighted I am!"—She descended from the chair, and gazed into my eyes so clearly and sweetly that my heart fairly laughed with joy.—"And are you glad?"—she asked me.

"I?" . . . I stammered.

"Sell me your ticket,"—suddenly blurted out Byelovzóroff, right in my ear.—"I 'll give you one hundred rubles for it."

I replied to the hussar by such a wrathful look

that Zinaída clapped her hands, and Lúshin cried: —"That 's a gallant fellow!"

"But,"—he went on,—"in my capacity of master of ceremonies, I am bound to see that all the regulations are carried out. M'sieu Voldemar, get down on one knee. That is our rule."

Zinaída stood before me with her head bent a little to one side, as though the better to scrutinise me, and offered me her hand with dignity. Things grew dim before my eyes; I tried to get down on one knee, plumped down on both knees, and applied my lips to Zinaída's fingers in so awkward a manner that I scratched the tip of my nose slightly on her nails.

"Good!"—shouted Lúshin, and helped me to rise.

The game of forfeits continued. Zinaída placed me beside her. What penalties they did invent! Among other things, she had to impersonate a "statue"—and she selected as a pedestal the monstrously homely Nirmátzky, ordering him to lie flat on the floor, and to tuck his face into his breast. The laughter did not cease for a single moment. All this noise and uproar, this unceremonious, almost tumultuous merriment, these unprecedented relations with strangers, fairly flew to my head; for I was a boy who had been reared soberly, and in solitude, and had grown up in a stately home of gentry. I became simply intoxicated, as though with wine. I began to shout

with laughter and chatter more loudly than the rest, so that even the old Princess, who was sitting in the adjoining room with some sort of pettifogger from the Íversky Gate [1] who had been summoned for a conference, came out to take a look at me. But I felt so happy that, as the saying is, I did n't care a farthing for anybody's ridicule, or anybody's oblique glances.

Zinaída continued to display a preference for me and never let me leave her side. In one forfeit I was made to sit by her, covered up with one and the same silk kerchief: I was bound to tell her *my secret.* I remember how our two heads found themselves suddenly in choking, semi-transparent, fragrant gloom; how near and softly her eyes sparkled in that gloom, and how hotly her parted lips breathed; and her teeth were visible, and the tips of her hair tickled and burned me. I maintained silence. She smiled mysteriously and slyly, and at last whispered to me: "Well, what is it?" But I merely flushed and laughed, and turned away, and could hardly draw my breath. We got tired of forfeits, and began to play "string." Good heavens! what rapture I felt when, forgetting myself with gaping, I received from her a strong, sharp rap on my fingers; and how afterward I tried to pretend that I was

[1] The famous gate from the "White town" into the "China town," in Moscow, where there is a renowned holy picture of the Iberian Virgin, in a chapel. Evidently the lawyers' quarter was in this vicinity. — Translator.

yawning with inattention, but she mocked at me and did not touch my hands, which were awaiting the blow!

But what a lot of other pranks we played that same evening! We played on the piano, and sang, and danced, and represented a gipsy camp. We dressed Nirmátzky up like a bear, and fed him with water and salt. Count Malévsky showed us several card tricks, and ended by stacking the cards and dealing himself all the trumps at whist; upon which Lúshin "had the honour of congratulating him." Maidánoff declaimed to us fragments from his poem, "The Murderer" (this occurred in the very thick of romanticism), which he intended to publish in a black binding, with the title in letters of the colour of blood. We stole his hat from the knees of the pettifogger from the Íversky Gate, and made him dance the kazák dance by way of redeeming it. We dressed old Vonifáty up in a mob-cap, and the young Princess put on a man's hat. . . . It is impossible to recount all we did. Byelovzóroff alone remained most of the time in a corner, angry and frowning. . . . Sometimes his eyes became suffused with blood, he grew scarlet all over and seemed to be on the very point of swooping down upon all of us and scattering us on all sides, like chips; but the Princess glanced at him, menaced him with her finger, and again he retired into his corner.

We were completely exhausted at last. The old Princess was equal to anything, as she put it, —no shouts disconcerted her,—but she felt tired and wished to rest. At midnight supper was served, consisting of a bit of old, dry cheese and a few cold patties filled with minced ham, which seemed to us more savoury than any pasty; there was only one bottle of wine, and that was rather queer:—dark, with a swollen neck, and the wine in it left an after-taste of pinkish dye; however, no one drank it. Weary and happy to exhaustion, I emerged from the wing; a thunder-storm seemed to be brewing; the black storm-clouds grew larger and crept across the sky, visibly altering their smoky outlines. A light breeze was uneasily quivering in the dark trees, and somewhere beyond the horizon the thunder was growling angrily and dully, as though to itself.

I made my way through the back door to my room. My nurse-valet was sleeping on the floor and I was obliged to step over him; he woke up, saw me, and reported that my mother was angry with me, and had wanted to send after me again, but that my father had restrained her. I never went to bed without having bidden my mother good night and begged her blessing. There was no help for it! I told my valet that I would undress myself and go to bed unaided,—and extinguished the candle. But I did not undress and I did not go to bed.

I seated myself on a chair and sat there for a long time, as though enchanted. That which I felt was so new and so sweet . . . . . I sat there, hardly looking around me and without moving, breathing slowly, and only laughing silently now, as I recalled, now inwardly turning cold at the thought that I was in love, that here it was, that love. Zinaída's face floated softly before me in the darkness—floated, but did not float away; her lips still smiled as mysteriously as ever, her eyes gazed somewhat askance at me, interrogatively, thoughtfully and tenderly . . . . as at the moment when I had parted from her. At last I rose on tiptoe, stepped to my bed and cautiously, without undressing, laid my head on the pillow, as though endeavouring by the sharp movement to frighten off that wherewith I was filled to overflowing. . . .

I lay down, but did not even close an eye. I speedily perceived that certain faint reflections kept constantly falling into my room. . . . . I raised myself and looked out of the window. Its frame was distinctly defined from the mysteriously and confusedly whitened panes. " 'T is the thunder-storm,"—I thought,—and so, in fact, there was a thunder-storm; but it had passed very far away, so that even the claps of thunder were not audible; only in the sky long, indistinct, branching flashes of lightning, as it were, were uninterruptedly flashing up. They were not

flashing up so much as they were quivering and twitching, like the wing of a dying bird. I rose, went to the window, and stood there until morning. . . . The lightning-flashes never ceased for a moment; it was what is called a pitch-black night. I gazed at the dumb, sandy plain, at the dark mass of the Neskútchny Park, at the yellowish façades of the distant buildings, which also seemed to be trembling at every faint flash. . . . I gazed, and could not tear myself away; those dumb lightning-flashes, those restrained gleams, seemed to be responding to the dumb and secret outbursts which were flaring up within me also. Morning began to break; the dawn started forth in scarlet patches. With the approach of the sun the lightning-flashes grew paler and paler; they quivered more and more infrequently, and vanished at last, drowned in the sobering and unequivocal light of the breaking day.

And my lightning-flashes vanished within me also. I felt great fatigue and tranquillity . . . but Zinaída's image continued to hover triumphantly over my soul. Only it, that image, seemed calm; like a flying swan from the marshy sedges, it separated itself from the other ignoble figures which surrounded it, and as I fell asleep, I bowed down before it for the last time in farewell and confiding adoration. . . .

Oh, gentle emotions, soft sounds, kindness and

calming of the deeply-moved soul, melting joy of the first feelings of love,—where are ye, where are ye?

## VIII

On the following morning, when I went downstairs to tea, my mother scolded me,—although less than I had anticipated,—and made me narrate how I had spent the preceding evening. I answered her in few words, omitting many particulars and endeavouring to impart to my narrative the most innocent of aspects.

"Nevertheless, they are not people *comme il faut,*"—remarked my mother;—"and I do not wish thee to run after them, instead of preparing thyself for the examination, and occupying thyself."

As I knew that my mother's anxiety was confined to these few words, I did not consider it necessary to make her any reply; but after tea my father linked his arm in mine, and betaking himself to the garden with me, made me tell him everything I had done and seen at the Zasyékins'.

My father possessed a strange influence over me, and our relations were strange. He paid hardly any attention to my education, but he never wounded me; he respected my liberty—he was even, if I may so express it, courteous to me .... only, he did not allow me to get close to him.

I loved him, I admired him; he seemed to me a model man; and great heavens! how passionately attached to him I should have been, had I not constantly felt his hand warding me off! On the other hand, when he wished, he understood how to evoke in me, instantaneously, with one word, one movement, unbounded confidence in him. My soul opened, I chatted with him as with an intelligent friend, as with an indulgent preceptor . . . . then, with equal suddenness, he abandoned me, and again his hand repulsed me, caressingly and softly, but repulsed nevertheless.

Sometimes a fit of mirth came over him, and then he was ready to frolic and play with me like a boy (he was fond of every sort of energetic bodily exercise); once—only once—did he caress me with so much tenderness that I came near bursting into tears. . . . But his mirth and tenderness also vanished without leaving a trace, and what had taken place between us gave me no hopes for the future; it was just as though I had seen it all in a dream. I used to stand and scrutinise his clever, handsome, brilliant face . . . . and my heart would begin to quiver, and my whole being would yearn toward him, . . . . and he would seem to feel what was going on within me, and would pat me on the cheek in passing—and either go away, or begin to occupy himself with something, or suddenly freeze all over,—as he alone knew how to freeze,—and I would immedi-

ately shrivel up and grow frigid also. His rare fits of affection for me were never called forth by my speechless but intelligible entreaties; they always came upon him without warning. When meditating, in after years, upon my father's character, I came to the conclusion that he did not care for me or for family life; he loved something different, and enjoyed that other thing to the full. " Seize what thou canst thyself, and do not give thyself into any one's power; the whole art of life consists in belonging to one's self,"—he said to me once. On another occasion I, in my capacity of a young democrat, launched out in his presence into arguments about liberty (he was what I called " kind " that day; at such times one could say whatever one liked to him).—" Liberty,"—he repeated,—" but dost thou know what can give a man liberty? "

" What? "

" Will, his own will, and the power which it gives is better than liberty. Learn to will, and thou wilt be free, and wilt command."

My father wished, first of all and most of all, to enjoy life—and he did enjoy life. . . . . Perhaps he had a presentiment that he was not fated long to take advantage of the " art " of living: he died at the age of forty-two.

I described to my father in detail my visit to the Zasyékins. He listened to me half-attentively, half-abstractedly, as he sat on the bench

and drew figures on the sand with the tip of his riding-whip. Now and then he laughed, glanced at me in a brilliant, amused sort of way, and spurred me on by brief questions and exclamations. At first I could not bring myself even to utter Zinaída's name, but I could not hold out, and began to laud her. My father still continued to laugh. Then he became thoughtful, dropped his eyes and rose to his feet.

I recalled the fact that, as he came out of the house, he had given orders that his horse should be saddled. He was a capital rider, and knew much better how to tame the wildest horses than did Mr. Rarey.

"Shall I ride with thee, papa?"—I asked him.

"No,"—he replied, and his face assumed its habitual indifferently-caressing expression.—"Go alone, if thou wishest; but tell the coachman that I shall not go."

He turned his back on me and walked swiftly away. I followed him with my eyes, until he disappeared beyond the gate. I saw his hat moving along the fence; he went into the Zasyékins' house.

He remained with them no more than an hour, but immediately thereafter went off to town and did not return home until evening.

After dinner I went to the Zasyékins' myself. I found no one in the drawing-room but the old Princess. When she saw me, she scratched her

head under her cap with the end of her knitting-needle, and suddenly asked me: would I copy a petition for her?

"With pleasure,"—I replied, and sat down on the edge of a chair.

"Only look out, and see that you make the letters as large as possible,"—said the Princess, handing me a sheet of paper scrawled over in a slovenly manner:—"and could n't you do it to-day, my dear fellow?"

"I will copy it this very day, madam."

The door of the adjoining room opened a mere crack and Zinaída's face showed itself in the aperture,—pale, thoughtful, with hair thrown carelessly back. She stared at me with her large, cold eyes, and softly shut the door.

"Zína,—hey there, Zína!"—said the old woman. Zinaída did not answer. I carried away the old woman's petition, and sat over it the whole evening.

## IX

My "passion" began with that day. I remember that I then felt something of that which a man must feel when he enters the service: I had already ceased to be a young lad; I was in love. I have said that my passion dated from that day; I might have added that my sufferings also dated from that day. I languished when absent from Zinaída; my mind would not work, everything

fell from my hands; I thought intently of her for days together. . . . I languished . . . . but in her presence I was no more at ease. I was jealous, I recognised my insignificance, I stupidly sulked and stupidly fawned; and, nevertheless, an irresistible force drew me to her, and every time I stepped across the threshold of her room, it was with an involuntary thrill of happiness. Zinaída immediately divined that I had fallen in love with her, and I never thought of concealing the fact; she mocked at my passion, played tricks on me, petted and tormented me. It is sweet to be the sole source, the autocratic and irresponsible cause of the greatest joys and the profoundest woe to another person, and I was like soft wax in Zinaída's hands. However, I was not the only one who was in love with her; all the men who were in the habit of visiting her house were crazy over her, and she kept them all in a leash at her feet. It amused her to arouse in them now hopes, now fears, to twist them about at her caprice (she called it, "knocking people against one another"),—and they never thought of resisting, and willingly submitted to her. In all her vivacious and beautiful being there was a certain peculiarly bewitching mixture of guilefulness and heedlessness, of artificiality and simplicity, of tranquillity and playfulness; over everything she did or said, over her every movement, hovered a light, delicate charm, and an original, sparkling

force made itself felt in everything. And her face was incessantly changing and sparkling also; it expressed almost simultaneously derision, pensiveness, and passion. The most varied emotions, light, fleeting as the shadows of the clouds on a sunny, windy day, kept flitting over her eyes and lips.

Every one of her adorers was necessary to her. Byelovzóroff, whom she sometimes called "my wild beast," and sometimes simply "my own," would gladly have flung himself into the fire for her; without trusting to his mental capacities and other merits, he kept proposing that he should marry her, and hinting that the others were merely talking idly. Maidánoff responded to the poetical chords of her soul: a rather cold man, as nearly all writers are, he assured her with intense force—and perhaps himself also—that he adored her. He sang her praises in interminable verses and read them to her with an unnatural and a genuine sort of enthusiasm. And she was interested in him and jeered lightly at him; she did not believe in him greatly, and after listening to his effusions she made him read Púshkin, in order, as she said, to purify the air. Lúshin, the sneering doctor, who was cynical in speech, knew her best of all and loved her best of all, although he abused her to her face and behind her back. She respected him, but would not let him go, and sometimes, with a peculiar, malicious pleasure, made

him feel that he was in her hands. "I am a coquette, I am heartless, I have the nature of an actress," she said to him one day in my presence; "and 't is well! So give me your hand and I will stick a pin into it, and you will feel ashamed before this young man, and it will hurt you; but nevertheless, Mr. Upright Man, you will be so good as to laugh." Lúshin flushed crimson, turned away and bit his lips, but ended by putting out his hand. She pricked it, and he actually did break out laughing . . . . and she laughed also, thrusting the pin in pretty deeply and gazing into his eyes while he vainly endeavoured to glance aside. . . .

I understood least of all the relations existing between Zinaída and Count Malévsky. That he was handsome, adroit, and clever even I felt, but the presence in him of some false, dubious element, was palpable even to me, a lad of sixteen, and I was amazed that Zinaída did not notice it. But perhaps she did detect that false element and it did not repel her. An irregular education, strange acquaintances, the constant presence of her mother, the poverty and disorder in the house —all this, beginning with the very freedom which the young girl enjoyed, together with the consciousness of her own superiority to the people who surrounded her, had developed in her a certain half-scornful carelessness and lack of exaction. No matter what happened—whether Voni-

fáty came to report that there was no sugar, or some wretched bit of gossip came to light, or the visitors got into a quarrel among themselves, she merely shook her curls, and said: "Nonsense!" —and grieved very little over it.

On the contrary, all my blood would begin to seethe when Malévsky would approach her, swaying his body cunningly like a fox, lean elegantly over the back of her chair and begin to whisper in her ear with a conceited and challenging smile, while she would fold her arms on her breast, gaze attentively at him and smile also, shaking her head the while.

"What possesses you to receive Malévsky?"— I asked her one day.

"Why, he has such handsome eyes,"—she replied.—"But that is no business of yours."

"You are not to think that I am in love with him,"—she said to me on another occasion.— "No; I cannot love people upon whom I am forced to look down. I must have some one who can subdue me. . . . And I shall not hit upon such an one, for God is merciful! I shall not spare any one who falls into my paws—no, no!"

"Do you mean to say that you will never fall in love?"

"And how about you? Don't I love you?"— she said, tapping me on the nose with the tip of her glove.

Yes, Zinaída made great fun of me. For the

space of three weeks I saw her every day; and what was there that she did not do to me! She came to us rarely, but I did not regret that; in our house she was converted into a young lady, a Princess,—and I avoided her. I was afraid of betraying myself to my mother; she was not at all well disposed toward Zinaída, and kept a disagreeable watch on us. I was not so much afraid of my father; he did not appear to notice me, and talked little with her, but that little in a peculiarly clever and significant manner. I ceased to work, to read; I even ceased to stroll about the environs and to ride on horseback. Like a beetle tied by the leg, I hovered incessantly around the beloved wing; I believe I would have liked to remain there forever . . . . . but that was impossible. My mother grumbled at me, and sometimes Zinaída herself drove me out. On such occasions I shut myself up in my own room, or walked off to the very end of the garden, climbed upon the sound remnant of a tall stone hothouse, and dangling my legs over the wall, I sat there for hours and stared,—stared without seeing anything. White butterflies lazily flitted among the nettles beside me; an audacious sparrow perched not far off on the half-demolished red bricks and twittered in an irritating manner, incessantly twisting his whole body about and spreading out his tail; the still distrustful crows now and then emitted a caw, as they sat high, high above me on the naked crest

of a birch-tree; the sun and the wind played softly through its sparse branches; the chiming of the bells, calm and melancholy, at the Don Monastery was wafted to me now and then,—and I sat on, gazing and listening, and became filled with a certain nameless sensation which embraced everything: sadness and joy, and a presentiment of the future, and the desire and the fear of life. But I understood nothing at the time of all that which was fermenting within me, or I would have called it all by one name, the name of Zinaída.

But Zinaída continued to play with me as a cat plays with a mouse. Now she coquetted with me, and I grew agitated and melted with emotion; now she repulsed me, and I dared not approach her, dared not look at her.

I remember that she was very cold toward me for several days in succession and I thoroughly quailed, and when I timidly ran to the wing to see them, I tried to keep near the old Princess, despite the fact that she was scolding and screaming a great deal just at that time: her affairs connected with her notes of hand were going badly, and she had also had two scenes with the police-captain of the precinct.

One day I was walking through the garden, past the familiar fence, when I caught sight of Zinaída. Propped up on both arms, she was sitting motionless on the grass. I tried to withdraw cautiously, but she suddenly raised her head and

made an imperious sign to me. I became petrified on the spot; I did not understand her the first time. She repeated her sign. I immediately sprang over the fence and ran joyfully to her; but she stopped me with a look and pointed to the path a couple of paces from her. In my confusion, not knowing what to do, I knelt down on the edge of the path. She was so pale, such bitter grief, such profound weariness were revealed in her every feature, that my heart contracted within me, and I involuntarily murmured: "What is the matter with you?"

Zinaída put out her hand, plucked a blade of grass, bit it, and tossed it away as far as she could.

"Do you love me very much?"—she inquired suddenly.—"Yes?"

I made no answer,—and what answer was there for me to make?

"Yes,"—she repeated, gazing at me as before. —"It is so. They are the same eyes,"—she added, becoming pensive, and covering her face with her hands.—"Everything has become repulsive to me,"—she whispered;—"I would like to go to the end of the world; I cannot endure this, I cannot reconcile myself. . . . And what is in store for me? . . . . Akh, I am heavy at heart . . . . my God, how heavy at heart!"

"Why?"—I timidly inquired.

Zinaída did not answer me and merely shrugged her shoulders. I continued to kneel and

to gaze at her with profound melancholy. Every word of hers fairly cut me to the heart. At that moment, I think I would willingly have given my life to keep her from grieving. I gazed at her, and nevertheless, not understanding why she was heavy at heart, I vividly pictured to myself how, in a fit of uncontrollable sorrow, she had suddenly gone into the garden, and had fallen on the earth, as though she had been mowed down. All around was bright and green; the breeze was rustling in the foliage of the trees, now and then rocking a branch of raspberry over Zinaída's head. Doves were cooing somewhere and the bees were humming as they flew low over the scanty grass. Overhead the sky shone blue,—but I was so sad. . . . .

"Recite some poetry to me,"—said Zinaída in a low voice, leaning on her elbow.—"I like to hear you recite verses. You make them go in a sing-song, but that does not matter, it is youthful. Recite to me: 'On the Hills of Georgia.'—Only, sit down first."

I sat down and recited, "On the Hills of Georgia."

"'That it is impossible not to love,'"—repeated Zinaída.—"That is why poetry is so nice; it says to us that which does not exist, and which is not only better than what does exist, but even more like the truth. . . . "'That it is impossible not to love'?—I would like to, but cannot!"—Again she

fell silent for a space, then suddenly started and rose to her feet.—"Come along. Maidánoff is sitting with mamma; he brought his poem to me, but I left him. He also is embittered now . . . . how can it be helped? Some day you will find out . . . . but you must not be angry with me!"

Zináida hastily squeezed my hand, and ran on ahead. We returned to the wing. Maidánoff set to reading us his poem of "The Murderer," which had only just been printed, but I did not listen. He shrieked out his four-footed iambics in a sing-song voice; the rhymes alternated and jingled like sleigh-bells, hollow and loud; but I kept staring all the while at Zinaída, and striving to understand the meaning of her strange words.

"Or, perchance, a secret rival
Has unexpectedly subjugated thee?"

suddenly exclaimed Maidánoff through his nose —and my eyes and Zinaída's met. She dropped hers and blushed faintly. I saw that she was blushing, and turned cold with fright. I had been jealous before, but only at that moment did the thought that she had fallen in love flash through my mind. "My God! She is in love!"

## X

My real tortures began from that moment. I cudgelled my brains, I pondered and pondered again, and watched Zinaída importunately, but

secretly, as far as possible. A change had taken place in her, that was evident. She took to going off alone to walk, and walked a long while. Sometimes she did not show herself to her visitors; she sat for hours together in her chamber. This had not been her habit hitherto. Suddenly I became—or it seemed to me that I became—extremely penetrating. "Is it he? Or is it not he?"—I asked myself, as in trepidation I mentally ran from one of her admirers to another. Count Malévsky (although I felt ashamed to admit it for Zinaída's sake) privately seemed to me more dangerous than the others.

My powers of observation extended no further than the end of my own nose, and my dissimulation probably failed to deceive any one; at all events, Doctor Lúshin speedily saw through me. Moreover, he also had undergone a change of late; he had grown thin, he laughed as frequently as ever, but somehow it was in a duller, more spiteful, a briefer way;—an involuntary, nervous irritability had replaced his former light irony and feigned cynicism.

"Why are you forever tagging on here, young man?"—he said to me one day, when he was left alone with me in the Zasyékins' drawing-room. (The young Princess had not yet returned from her stroll and the shrill voice of the old Princess was resounding in the upper story; she was wrangling with her maid.)—"You ought to be

studying your lessons, working while you are young;—but instead of that, what are you doing?"

"You cannot tell whether I work at home,"—I retorted not without arrogance, but also not without confusion.

"Much work you do! That 's not what you have in your head. Well, I will not dispute . . . at your age, that is in the natural order of things. But your choice is far from a happy one. Can't you see what sort of a house this is?"

"I do not understand you,"—I remarked.

"You don't understand me? So much the worse for you. I regard it as my duty to warn you. Fellows like me, old bachelors, may sit here: what harm will it do us? We are a hardened lot. You can't pierce our hide, but your skin is still tender; the air here is injurious for you,—believe me, you may become infected."

"How so?"

"Because you may. Are you healthy now? Are you in a normal condition? Is what you are feeling useful to you, good for you?"

"But what am I feeling?"—said I;—and in my secret soul I admitted that the doctor was right.

"Eh, young man, young man,"—pursued the doctor, with an expression as though something extremely insulting to me were contained in those two words;—"there 's no use in your dissimulat-

ing, for what you have in your soul you still show in your face, thank God! But what 's the use of arguing? I would not come hither myself, if . . . ." (the doctor set his teeth) . . . . " if I were not such an eccentric fellow. Only this is what amazes me —how you, with your intelligence, can fail to see what is going on around you."

" But what is going on? "—I interposed, pricking up my ears.

The doctor looked at me with a sort of sneering compassion.

" A nice person I am,"—said he, as though speaking to himself.—" What possessed me to say that to him. In a word,"—he added, raising his voice,—" I repeat to you: the atmosphere here is not good for you. You find it pleasant here, and no wonder! And the scent of a hothouse is pleasant also—but one cannot live in it! Hey! hearken to me,—set to work again on Kaidánoff."

The old Princess entered and began to complain to the doctor of toothache. Then Zinaída made her appearance.

" Here,"—added the old Princess,—" scold her, doctor, do. She drinks iced water all day long; is that healthy for her, with her weak chest? "

" Why do you do that? "—inquired Lúshin.

" But what result can it have? "

" What result? You may take cold and die."

"Really? Is it possible? Well, all right—that just suits me!"

"You don't say so!"—growled the doctor. The old Princess went away.

"I do say so,"—retorted Zinaída.—"Is living such a cheerful thing? Look about you. . . Well—is it nice? Or do you think that I do not understand it, do not feel it? It affords me pleasure to drink iced water, and you can seriously assure me that such a life is worth too much for me to imperil it for a moment's pleasure—I do not speak of happiness."

"Well, yes,"—remarked Lúshin:—"caprice and independence. . . . . Those two words sum you up completely; your whole nature lies in those two words."

Zinaída burst into a nervous laugh.

"You 're too late by one mail, my dear doctor. You observe badly; you are falling behind.—Put on your spectacles.—I am in no mood for caprices now; how jolly to play pranks on you or on myself!—and as for independence . . . . . M'sieu Voldemar,"—added Zinaída, suddenly stamping her foot,—"don't wear a melancholy face. I cannot endure to have people commiserating me."—She hastily withdrew.

"This atmosphere is injurious, injurious to you, young man,"—said Lúshin to me once more.

## XI

On the evening of that same day the customary visitors assembled at the Zasyékins'; I was among the number.

The conversation turned on Maidánoff's poem; Zinaída candidly praised it.—"But do you know what?"—she said:—"If I were a poet, I would select other subjects. Perhaps this is all nonsense, but strange thoughts sometimes come into my head, especially when I am wakeful toward morning, when the sky is beginning to turn pink and grey.—I would, for example .... You will not laugh at me?"

"No! No!"—we all exclaimed with one voice.

"I would depict,"—she went on, crossing her arms on her breast, and turning her eyes aside,—"a whole company of young girls, by night, in a big boat, on a tranquil river. The moon is shining, and they are all in white and wear garlands of white flowers, and they are singing, you know, something in the nature of a hymn."

"I understand, I understand, go on,"—said Maidánoff significantly and dreamily.

"Suddenly there is a noise—laughter, torches, tambourines on the shore. . . . It is a throng of bacchantes running with songs and outcries. It is your business to draw the picture, Mr. Poet ....

only I would like to have the torches red and very smoky, and that the eyes of the bacchantes should gleam beneath their wreaths, and that the wreaths should be dark. Don't forget also tiger-skins and cups—and gold, a great deal of gold."

"But where is the gold to be?" inquired Maidánoff, tossing back his lank hair and inflating his nostrils.

"Where? On the shoulders, the hands, the feet, everywhere. They say that in ancient times women wore golden rings on their ankles.—The bacchantes call the young girls in the boat to come to them. The girls have ceased to chant their hymn,—they cannot go on with it,—but they do not stir; the river drifts them to the shore. And now suddenly one of them rises quietly. . . . This must be well described: how she rises quietly in the moonlight, and how startled her companions are. . . . She has stepped over the edge of the boat, the bacchantes have surrounded her, they have dashed off into the night, into the gloom. . . . Present at this point smoke in clouds; and everything has become thoroughly confused. Nothing is to be heard but their whimpering, and her wreath has been left lying on the shore."

Zinaída ceased speaking. "Oh, she is in love!"—I thought again.

"Is that all?"—asked Maidánoff.

"That is all,"—she replied.

"That cannot be made the subject of an entire

poem,"—he remarked pompously,—"but I will utilise your idea for some lyrical verses."

"In the romantic vein?"—asked Malévsky.

"Of course, in the romantic vein—in Byron's style."

"But in my opinion, Hugo is better than Byron,"—remarked the young Count, carelessly:—"he is more interesting."

"Hugo is a writer of the first class,"—rejoined Maidánoff, "and my friend Tonkoshéeff, in his Spanish romance, 'El Trovador'...."

"Ah, that 's the book with the question-marks turned upside down?"—interrupted Zinaída.

"Yes. That is the accepted custom among the Spaniards. I was about to say that Tonkoshéeff....."

"Come now! You will begin to wrangle again about classicism and romanticism,"—Zinaída interrupted him again.—"Let us rather play...."

"At forfeits?"—put in Lúshin.

"No, forfeits is tiresome; but at comparisons." (This game had been invented by Zinaída herself; some object was named, and each person tried to compare it with something or other, and the one who matched the thing with the best comparison received a prize.) She went to the window. The sun had just set; long, crimson clouds hung high aloft in the sky.

"What are those clouds like?"—inquired Zinaída and, without waiting for our answers, she

said:—"I think that they resemble those crimson sails which were on Cleopatra's golden ship, when she went to meet Antony. You were telling me about that not long ago, do you remember, Maidánoff?"

All of us, like Polonius in "Hamlet," decided that the clouds reminded us precisely of those sails, and that none of us could find a better comparison.

"And how old was Antony at that time?"—asked Zinaída.

"He was assuredly still a young man,"—remarked Malévsky.

"Yes, he was young,"—assented Maidánoff confidently.

"Excuse me,"—exclaimed Lúshin,—"he was over forty years of age."

"Over forty years of age,"—repeated Zinaída, darting a swift glance at him. . . .

I soon went home.—"She is in love," my lips whispered involuntarily. . . . "But with whom?"

## XII

The days passed by. Zinaída grew more and more strange, more and more incomprehensible. One day I entered her house and found her sitting on a straw-bottomed chair, with her head pressed against the sharp edge of a table. She straight-

ened up . . . . her face was again all bathed in tears.

"Ah! It 's you!"—she said, with a harsh grimace.—"Come hither."

I went up to her: she laid her hand on my head and, suddenly seizing me by the hair, began to pull it.

"It hurts" . . . I said at last.

"Ah! It hurts! And does n't it hurt me? Does n't it hurt me?"—she repeated.

"Aï!"—she suddenly cried, perceiving that she had pulled out a small tuft of my hair.—"What have I done? Poor M'sieu Voldemar!" She carefully straightened out the hairs she had plucked out, wound them round her finger, and twisted them into a ring.

"I will put your hair in my locket and wear it,"—she said, and tears glistened in her eyes.—"Perhaps that will comfort you a little . . . . but now, good-bye."

I returned home and found an unpleasant state of things there. A scene was in progress between my father and my mother; she was upbraiding him for something or other, while he, according to his wont, was maintaining a cold, polite silence—and speedily went away. I could not hear what my mother was talking about, neither did I care to know: I remember only, that, at the conclusion of the scene, she ordered me to be called to her boudoir, and expressed herself with great dis-

satisfaction about my frequent visits at the house of the old Princess, who was, according to her assertions, *une femme capable de tout.* I kissed her hand (I always did that when I wanted to put an end to the conversation), and went off to my own room. Zinaída's tears had completely discomfited me; I positively did not know what to think, and was ready to cry myself: I was still a child, in spite of my sixteen years. I thought no more of Malévsky, although Byelovzóroff became more and more menacing every day, and glared at the shifty Count like a wolf at a sheep; but I was not thinking of anything or of anybody. I lost myself in conjectures and kept seeking isolated spots. I took a special fancy to the ruins of the hothouse. I could clamber up on the high wall, seat myself, and sit there such an unhappy, lonely, and sad youth that I felt sorry for myself—and how delightful those mournful sensations were, how I gloated over them! . . .

One day, I was sitting thus on the wall, gazing off into the distance and listening to the chiming of the bells . . . . when suddenly something ran over me—not a breeze exactly, not a shiver, but something resembling a breath, the consciousness of some one's proximity. . . . I dropped my eyes. Below me, in a light grey gown, with a pink parasol on her shoulder, Zinaída was walking hastily along the road. She saw me, halted, and, pushing

up the brim of her straw hat, raised her velvety eyes to mine.

"What are you doing there, on such a height?" —she asked me, with a strange sort of smile.— "There now,"—she went on,—"you are always declaring that you love me—jump down to me here on the road if you really do love me."

Before the words were well out of Zinaída's mouth I had flown down, exactly as though some one had given me a push from behind. The wall was about two fathoms high. I landed on the ground with my feet, but the shock was so violent that I could not retain my balance; I fell, and lost consciousness for a moment. When I came to myself I felt, without opening my eyes, that Zinaída was by my side.—"My dear boy,"—she was saying, as she bent over me—and tender anxiety was audible in her voice—"how couldst thou do that, how couldst thou obey? . . . . I love thee . . . . rise."

Her breast was heaving beside me, her hands were touching my head, and suddenly—what were my sensations then!—her soft, fresh lips began to cover my whole face with kisses . . . . they touched my lips. . . . But at this point Zinaída probably divined from the expression of my face that I had already recovered consciousness, although I still did not open my eyes—and swiftly rising to her feet, she said:—"Come, get up, you

rogue, you foolish fellow! Why do you lie there in the dust?"—I got up.

"Give me my parasol,"—said Zinaída.—"I have thrown it somewhere; and don't look at me like that . . . . . what nonsense is this? You are hurt? You have burned yourself with the nettles, I suppose. Don't look at me like that, I tell you. . . . Why, he understands nothing, he doesn't answer me,"—she added, as though speaking to herself. . . . "Go home, M'sieu Voldemar, brush yourself off, and don't dare to follow me—if you do I shall be very angry, and I shall never again . . . ."

She did not finish her speech and walked briskly away, while I sat down by the roadside . . . my legs would not support me. The nettles had stung my hands, my back ached, and my head was reeling; but the sensation of beatitude which I then experienced has never since been repeated in my life. It hung like a sweet pain in all my limbs and broke out at last in rapturous leaps and exclamations. As a matter of fact, I was still a child.

## XIII

I WAS so happy and proud all that day; I preserved so vividly on my visage the feeling of Zinaída's kisses; I recalled her every word with such ecstasy; I so cherished my unexpected happiness that I even became frightened; I did not even

wish to see her who was the cause of those new sensations. It seemed to me that I could ask nothing more of Fate, that now I must "take and draw a deep breath for the last time, and die." On the other hand, when I set off for the wing next day, I felt a great agitation, which I vainly endeavoured to conceal beneath the discreet facial ease suitable for a man who wishes to let it be understood that he knows how to keep a secret. Zinaída received me very simply, without any emotion, merely shaking her finger at me and asking: Had I any bruises? All my discreet ease of manner and mysteriousness instantly disappeared, and along with them my agitation. Of course I had not expected anything in particular, but Zinaída's composure acted on me like a dash of cold water. I understood that I was a child in her eyes—and my heart waxed very heavy! Zinaída paced to and fro in the room, smiling swiftly every time she glanced at me; but her thoughts were far away, I saw that clearly. . . . . "Shall I allude to what happened yesterday myself,"—I thought;—"shall I ask her where she was going in such haste, in order to find out, definitively?" . . . . but I merely waved my hand in despair and sat down in a corner.

Byelovzóroff entered; I was delighted to see him.

"I have not found you a gentle saddle-horse," —he began in a surly tone;—"Freitag vouches

to me for one—but I am not convinced. I am afraid."

"Of what are you afraid, allow me to inquire?" asked Zinaída.

"Of what? Why, you don't know how to ride. God forbid that any accident should happen! And what has put that freak into your head?"

"Come, that's my affair, M'sieu my wild beast. In that case, I will ask Piótr Vasílievitch" . . . . (My father was called Piótr Vasilíevitch . . . . I was amazed that she should mention his name so lightly and freely, exactly as though she were convinced of his readiness to serve her.)

"You don't say so!"—retorted Byelovzóroff. —"Is it with him that you wish to ride?"

"With him or some one else,—that makes no difference to you. Only not with you."

"Not with me,"—said Byelovzóroff.—"As you like. What does it matter? I will get you the horse."

"But see to it that it is not a cow-like beast. I warn you in advance that I mean to gallop."

"Gallop, if you wish. . . . But is it with Malévsky that you are going to ride?"

"And why should n't I ride with him, warrior? Come, quiet down. I 'll take you too. You know that for me Malévsky is now—fie!"—She shook her head.

"You say that just to console me,"—growled Byelovzóroff.

Zinaída narrowed her eyes.—"Does that console you? . . oh . . oh . . . oh . . warrior!"—she said at last, as though unable to find any other word.—"And would you like to ride with us, M'sieu Voldemar?"

"I 'm not fond of riding . . . . in a large party," . . . I muttered, without raising my eyes.

"You prefer a *tête-à-tête?* . . . Well, every one to his taste,"—she said, with a sigh.—"But go, Byelovzóroff, make an effort. I want the horse for to-morrow."

"Yes; but where am I to get the money?"—interposed the old Princess.

Zinaída frowned.

"I am not asking any from you; Byelovzóroff will trust me."

"He will, he will," . . . . grumbled the old Princess—and suddenly screamed at the top of her voice:—"Dunyáshka!"

"*Maman*, I made you a present of a bell,"—remarked the young Princess.

"Dunyáshka!"—repeated the old woman.

Byelovzóroff bowed himself out; I went out with him. Zinaída did not detain me.

## XIV

I ROSE early the next morning, cut myself a staff, and went off beyond the city barrier. "I 'll have a walk and banish my grief,"—I said to myself.

It was a beautiful day, brilliant but not too hot; a cheerful, fresh breeze was blowing over the earth and rustling and playing moderately, keeping in constant motion and agitating nothing. For a long time I roamed about on the hills and in the forests. I did not feel happy; I had left home with the intention of surrendering myself to melancholy;—but youth, the fine weather, the fresh air, the diversion of brisk pedestrian exercise, the delight of lying in solitude on the thick grass, produced their effect; the memory of those unforgettable words, of those kisses, again thrust themselves into my soul. It was pleasant to me to think that Zinaída could not, nevertheless, fail to do justice to my decision, to my heroism. . . . "Others are better for her than I,"—I thought:—"so be it! On the other hand, the others only say what they will do, but I have done it! And what else am I capable of doing for her?"—My imagination began to ferment. I began to picture to myself how I would save her from the hands of enemies; how, all bathed in blood, I would wrest her out of prison; how I would die at her feet. I recalled a picture which hung in our drawing-room of Malek-Adel carrying off Matilda—and thereupon became engrossed in the appearance of a big, speckled woodpecker which was busily ascending the slender trunk of a birch-tree, and uneasily peering out from behind it, now on the right, now on the left,

like a musician from behind the neck of his bass-viol.

Then I began to sing: "Not the white snows," —and ran off into the romance which was well known at that period, "I will await thee when the playful breeze"; then I began to recite aloud Ermák's invocation to the stars in Khomyakóff's tragedy; I tried to compose something in a sentimental vein; I even thought out the line wherewith the whole poem was to conclude: "Oh, Zinaída! Zinaída!"—But it came to nothing. Meanwhile, dinner-time was approaching. I descended into the valley; a narrow, sandy path wound through it and led toward the town. I strolled along that path. . . . The dull trampling of horses' hoofs resounded behind me. I glanced round, involuntarily came to a standstill and pulled off my cap. I beheld my father and Zinaída. They were riding side by side. My father was saying something to her, bending his whole body toward her, and resting his hand on the neck of her horse; he was smiling. Zinaída was listening to him in silence, with her eyes severely downcast and lips compressed. At first I saw only them; it was not until several moments later that Byelovzóroff made his appearance from round a turn in the valley, dressed in hussar uniform with pelisse, and mounted on a foam-flecked black horse. The good steed was tossing his head, snorting and cur-

vetting; the rider was both reining him in and spurring him on. I stepped aside. My father gathered up his reins and moved away from Zinaída; she slowly raised her eyes to his—and both set off at a gallop. . . . Byelovzóroff dashed headlong after them with clanking sword. "He is as red as a crab,"—I thought,—"and she. . . . Why is she so pale? She has been riding the whole morning—and yet she is pale?"

I redoubled my pace and managed to reach home just before dinner. My father was already sitting, re-dressed, well-washed and fresh, beside my mother's arm-chair, and reading aloud to her in his even, sonorous voice, the feuilleton of the *Journal des Débats;* but my mother was listening to him inattentively and, on catching sight of me, inquired where I had been all day, adding, that she did not like to have me prowling about God only knew where and God only knew with whom. "But I have been walking alone,"—I was on the point of replying; but I glanced at my father and for some reason or other held my peace.

## XV

During the course of the next five or six days I hardly saw Zinaída; she gave it out that she was ill, which did not, however, prevent the habitual visitors from presenting themselves at the wing —"to take their turn in attendance,"—as they

expressed it;—all except Maidánoff, who immediately became dispirited as soon as he had no opportunity to go into raptures. Byelovzóroff sat morosely in a corner, all tightly buttoned up and red in the face; on Count Malévsky's delicate visage hovered constantly a sort of evil smile; he really had fallen into disfavour with Zinaída and listened with particular pains to the old Princess, and drove with her to the Governor-General's in a hired carriage. But this trip proved unsuccessful and even resulted in an unpleasantness for Malévsky: he was reminded of some row with certain Putéisk officers, and was compelled, in self-justification, to say that he was inexperienced at the time. Lúshin came twice a day, but did not remain long. I was somewhat afraid of him after our last explanation and, at the same time, I felt a sincere attachment for him. One day he went for a stroll with me in the Neskútchny Park, was very good-natured and amiable, imparted to me the names and properties of various plants and flowers, and suddenly exclaimed—without rhyme or reason, as the saying is—as he smote himself on the brow: "And I, like a fool, thought she was a coquette! Evidently, it is sweet to sacrifice one's self—for some people!"

"What do you mean to say by that?"—I asked.

"I don't mean to say anything to you,"—returned Lúshin, abruptly.

Zinaída avoided me; my appearance—I could not but perceive the fact—produced an unpleasant impression on her. She involuntarily turned away from me . . . . involuntarily; that was what was bitter, that was what broke my heart! But there was no help for it and I tried to keep out of her sight and only stand guard over her from a distance, in which I was not always successful. As before, something incomprehensible was taking place with her; her face had become different—she was altogether a different person. I was particularly struck by the change which had taken place in her on a certain warm, tranquil evening. I was sitting on a low bench under a wide-spreading elder-bush; I loved that little nook; the window of Zinaída's chamber was visible thence. I was sitting there; over my head, in the darkened foliage, a tiny bird was rummaging fussily about; a great cat with outstretched back had stolen into the garden, and the first beetles were booming heavily in the air, which was still transparent although no longer light. I sat there and stared at the window, and waited to see whether some one would not open it: and, in fact, it did open, and Zinaída made her appearance in it. She wore a white gown, and she herself—her face, her shoulders and her hands—was pale to whiteness. She remained for a long time motionless, and for a long time stared, without moving, straight in front of her from beneath her con-

tracted brows. I did not recognise that look in her. Then she clasped her hands very, very tightly, raised them to her lips, to her forehead—and suddenly, unlocking her fingers, pushed her hair away from her ears, shook it back and, throwing her head downward from above with a certain decisiveness, she shut the window with a bang.

Two days later she met me in the park. I tried to step aside, but she stopped me.

"Give me your hand,"—she said to me, with her former affection.—"It is a long time since you and I have had a chat."

I looked at her; her eyes were beaming softly and her face was smiling, as though athwart a mist.

"Are you still ailing?"—I asked her.

"No, everything has passed off now,"—she replied, breaking off a small, red rose.—"I am a little tired, but that will pass off also."

"And will you be once more the same as you used to be?"—I queried.

Zinaída raised the rose to her face, and it seemed to me as though the reflection of the brilliant petals fell upon her cheeks.—"Have I changed?"—she asked me.

"Yes, you have changed,"—I replied in a low voice.

"I was cold toward you,—I know that,"—began Zinaída;—"but you must not pay any heed

to that. . . . I could not do otherwise. . . . Come, what 's the use of talking about that? "

" You do not want me to love you—that 's what! " I exclaimed gloomily, with involuntary impetuosity.

" Yes, love me, but not as before."

" How then? "

" Let us be friends,—that is how! "—Zinaída allowed me to smell of the rose.—" Listen; I am much older than you, you know—I might be your aunt, really; well, if not your aunt, then your elder sister. While you . . . ."

" I am a child to you,"—I interrupted her.

" Well, yes, you are a child, but a dear, good, clever child, of whom I am very fond. Do you know what? I will appoint you to the post of my page from this day forth; and you are not to forget that pages must not be separated from their mistress. Here is a token of your new dignity for you,"—she added, sticking the rose into the button-hole of my round-jacket; " a token of our favour toward you."

" I have received many favours from you in the past,"—I murmured.

" Ah! "—said Zinaída, and darting a sidelong glance at me.—" What a memory you have! Well? And I am ready now also . . . ."

And bending toward me, she imprinted on my brow a pure, calm kiss.

I only stared at her—but she turned away and,

saying,—"Follow me, my page,"—walked to the wing. I followed her—and was in a constant state of bewilderment.—"Is it possible,"—I thought,—"that this gentle, sensible young girl is that same Zinaída whom I used to know?"—And her very walk seemed to me more quiet, her whole figure more majestic, more graceful. . . . And, my God! with what fresh violence did love flame up within me!

## XVI

After dinner the visitors were assembled again in the wing, and the young Princess came out to them. The whole company was present, in full force, as on that first evening, never to be forgotten by me: even Nirmátzky had dragged himself thither. Maidánoff had arrived earlier than all the rest; he had brought some new verses. The game of forfeits began again, but this time without the strange sallies, without pranks and uproar; the gipsy element had vanished. Zinaída gave a new mood to our gathering. I sat beside her, as a page should. Among other things, she proposed that the one whose forfeit was drawn should narrate his dream; but this was not a success. The dreams turned out to be either uninteresting (Byelovzóroff had dreamed that he had fed his horse on carp, and that it had a wooden head), or unnatural, fictitious. Maidánoff re-

galed us with a complete novel; there were sepulchres and angels with harps, and burning lights and sounds wafted from afar. Zinaída did not allow him to finish. " If it is a question of invention,"—said she,—" then let each one relate something which is positively made up."—Byelovzóroff had to speak first.

The young hussar became confused.—" I cannot invent anything! "—he exclaimed.

" What nonsense! " — interposed Zinaída. — " Come, imagine, for instance, that you are married, and tell us how you would pass the time with your wife. Would you lock her up? "

" I would."

" And would you sit with her yourself? "

" I certainly would sit with her myself."

" Very good. Well, and what if that bored her, and she betrayed you? "

" I would kill her."

" Just so. Well, now supposing that I were your wife, what would you do then? "

Byelovzóroff made no answer for a while.—" I would kill myself . . . ."

Zinaída burst out laughing.—" I see that there 's not much to be got out of you."

The second forfeit fell to Zinaída's share. She raised her eyes to the ceiling and meditated.— " See here,"—she began at last,—" this is what I have devised. . . . Imagine to yourselves a magnificent palace, a summer night, and a marvellous

ball. This ball is given by the young Queen. Everywhere there are gold, marble, silk, lights, diamonds, flowers, the smoke of incense—all the whims of luxury."

"Do you love luxury?"—interrupted Lúshin.

"Luxury is beautiful,"—she returned;—"I love everything that is beautiful."

"More than what is fine?"—he asked.

"That is difficult; somehow I don't understand. Don't bother me. So then, there is a magnificent ball. There are many guests, they are all young, very handsome, brave; all are desperately in love with the Queen."

"Are there no women among the guests?"—inquired Malévsky.

"No—or stay—yes, there are."

"Also very handsome?"

"Charming. But the men are all in love with the Queen. She is tall and slender; she wears a small gold diadem on her black hair."

I looked at Zinaída—and at that moment she seemed so far above us, her white forehead and her impassive eyebrows exhaled so much clear intelligence and such sovereignty, that I said to myself: "Thou thyself art that Queen!"

"All throng around her,"—pursued Zinaída; —"all lavish the most flattering speeches on her."

"And is she fond of flattery?"—asked Lúshin.

"How intolerable! He is continually interrupting. . . Who does not like flattery?"

"One more final question,"—remarked Malévsky:—"Has the Queen a husband?"

"I have not thought about that. No, why should she have a husband?"

"Of course,"—assented Malévsky;—"why should she have a husband?"

"Silence!"—exclaimed, in English, Maidánoff, who spoke French badly.

"*Merci,*"—said Zinaída to him.—"So then, the Queen listens to those speeches, listens to the music, but does not look at a single one of the guests. Six windows are open from top to bottom, from ceiling to floor, and behind them are the dark sky with great stars and the dark garden with huge trees. The Queen gazes into the garden. There, near the trees is a fountain: it gleams white athwart the gloom—long, as long as a spectre. The Queen hears the quiet plashing of its waters in the midst of the conversation and the music. She gazes and thinks: 'All of you gentlemen are noble, clever, wealthy; you are all ready to die at my feet, I rule over you; . . . . but yonder, by the side of the fountain, by the side of that plashing water, there is standing and waiting for me the man whom I love, who rules over me. He wears no rich garments, nor precious jewels; no one knows him; but he is waiting for me, and is convinced that I shall come—and I shall come, and there is no power in existence which can stop me when I wish to go to him and

remain with him and lose myself with him yonder, in the gloom of the park, beneath the rustling of the trees, beneath the plashing of the fountain . . . .' "

Zinaída ceased speaking.

" Is that an invention? "—asked Malévsky slyly.

Zinaída did not even glance at him.

" But what should we do, gentlemen,"—suddenly spoke up Lúshin,—" if we were among the guests and knew about that lucky man by the fountain? "

" Stay, stay,"—interposed Zinaída:—" I myself will tell you what each one of you would do. You, Byelovzóroff, would challenge him to a duel; you, Maidánoff, would write an epigram on him. . . . But no—you do not know how to write epigrams; you would compose a long iambic poem on him, after the style of Barbier, and would insert your production in the *Telegraph*. You, Nirmátzky, would borrow from him . . . . no, you would lend him money on interest; you, doctor . . . ." She paused. . . . " I really do not know about you,—what you would do."

" In my capacity of Court-physician," replied Lúshin, " I would advise the Queen not to give balls when she did not feel in the mood for guests . . . ."

" Perhaps you would be in the right. And you, Count? "

"And I?"—repeated Malévsky, with an evil smile.

"And you would offer him some poisoned sugar-plums."

Malévsky's face writhed a little and assumed for a moment a Jewish expression; but he immediately burst into a guffaw.

"As for you, M'sieu Voldemar . . . . ." went on Zinaída,—"but enough of this; let us play at some other game."

"M'sieu Voldemar, in his capacity of page to the Queen, would hold up her train when she ran off into the park,"—remarked Malévsky viciously.

I flared up, but Zinaída swiftly laid her hand on my shoulder and rising, said in a slightly tremulous voice:—"I have never given Your Radiance the right to be insolent, and therefore I beg that you will withdraw."—She pointed him to the door.

"Have mercy, Princess,"—mumbled Malévsky, turning pale all over.

"The Princess is right,"—exclaimed Byelovzóroff, rising to his feet also.

"By God! I never in the least expected this,"—went on Malévsky:—"I think there was nothing in my words which . . . . I had no intention of offending you. . . . Forgive me."

Zinaída surveyed him with a cold glance, and smiled coldly.—"Remain, if you like,"—she said,

with a careless wave of her hand.—"M'sieu Voldemar and I have taken offence without cause. You find it merry to jest. . . . I wish you well."

"Forgive me,"—repeated Malévsky once more; and I, recalling Zinaída's movement, thought again that a real queen could not have ordered an insolent man out of the room with more majesty.

The game of forfeits did not continue long after this little scene; all felt somewhat awkward, not so much in consequence of the scene itself as from another, not entirely defined, but oppressive sensation. No one alluded to it, but each one was conscious of its existence within himself and in his neighbour. Maidánoff recited to us all his poems —and Malévsky lauded them with exaggerated warmth.

"How hard he is trying to appear amiable now,"—Lúshin whispered to me.

We soon dispersed. Zinaída had suddenly grown pensive; the old Princess sent word that she had a headache; Nirmátzky began to complain of his rheumatism. . . .

For a long time I could not get to sleep; Zinaída's narrative had impressed me.—"Is it possible that it contains a hint?"—I asked myself: —"and at whom was she hinting? And if there really is some one to hint about . . . . what must I decide to do? No, no, it cannot be,"—I whis-

pered, turning over from one burning cheek to the other. . . . But I called to mind the expression of Zinaída's face during her narration. . . . I called to mind the exclamation which had broken from Lúshin in the Neskútchny Park, the sudden changes in her treatment of me—and lost myself in conjectures. "Who is he?" Those three words seemed to stand in front of my eyes, outlined in the darkness; a low-lying, ominous cloud seemed to be hanging over me—and I felt its pressure—and waited every moment for it to burst. I had grown used to many things of late; I had seen many things at the Zasyékins'; their disorderliness, tallow candle-ends, broken knives and forks, gloomy Vonifáty, the shabby maids, the manners of the old Princess herself,—all that strange life no longer surprised me. . . . But to that which I now dimly felt in Zinaída I could not get used . . . . "An adventuress,"—my mother had one day said concerning her. An adventuress—she, my idol, my divinity! That appellation seared me; I tried to escape from it by burrowing into my pillow; I raged—and at the same time, to what would not I have agreed, what would not I have given, if only I might be that happy mortal by the fountain! . . .

My blood grew hot and seethed within me. "A garden . . . . a fountain," . . . I thought. . . . "I will go into the garden." I dressed myself quickly and slipped out of the house. The

night was dark, the trees were barely whispering; a quiet chill was descending from the sky, an odour of fennel was wafted from the vegetable-garden. I made the round of all the alleys; the light sound of my footsteps both disconcerted me and gave me courage; I halted, waiting and listening to hear how my heart was beating quickly and violently. At last I approached the fence and leaned against a slender post. All at once—or was it only my imagination?—a woman's figure flitted past a few paces distant from me. . . . I strained my eyes intently on the darkness; I held my breath. What was this? Was it footsteps that I heard or was it the thumping of my heart again?—"Who is here?"—I stammered in barely audible tones. What was that again? A suppressed laugh? . . . . or a rustling in the leaves? . . . . or a sigh close to my very ear? I was terrified. . . . "Who is here?"—I repeated, in a still lower voice.

The breeze began to flutter for a moment; a fiery band flashed across the sky; a star shot down. —"Is it Zinaída?"—I tried to ask, but the sound died on my lips. And suddenly everything became profoundly silent all around, as often happens in the middle of the night. . . . Even the katydids ceased to shrill in the trees; only a window rattled somewhere. I stood and stood, then returned to my chamber, to my cold bed. I felt a strange agitation—exactly as though I had

gone to a tryst, and had remained alone, and had passed by some one else's happiness.

## XVII

The next day I caught only a glimpse of Zinaída; she drove away somewhere with the old Princess in a hired carriage. On the other hand, I saw Lúshin—who, however, barely deigned to bestow a greeting on me—and Malévsky. The young Count grinned and entered into conversation with me in friendly wise. Among all the visitors to the wing he alone had managed to effect an entrance to our house, and my mother had taken a fancy to him. My father did not favour him and treated him politely to the point of insult.

"Ah, *monsieur le page,*"—began Malévsky, —"I am very glad to meet you. What is your beauteous queen doing?"

His fresh, handsome face was so repulsive to me at that moment, and he looked at me with such a scornfully-playful stare, that I made him no answer whatsoever.

"Are you still in a bad humour?"—he went on. —"There is no occasion for it. It was not I, you know, who called you a page; and pages are chiefly with queens. But permit me to observe to you that you are fulfilling your duties badly."

"How so?"

"Pages ought to be inseparable from their sov-

ereigns; pages ought to know everything that they do; they ought even to watch over them,"—he added, lowering his voice,—"day and night."

"What do you mean by that?"

"What do I mean? I think I have expressed myself plainly. Day—and night. It does not matter so much about the day; by day it is light and there are people about; but by night—that 's exactly the time to expect a catastrophe. I advise you not to sleep o' nights and to watch, watch with all your might. Remember—in a garden, by night, near the fountain—that 's where you must keep guard. You will thank me for this."

Malévsky laughed and turned his back on me. He did not, in all probability, attribute any special importance to what he had said to me; he bore the reputation of being a capital hand at mystification, and was renowned for his cleverness in fooling people at the masquerades, in which that almost unconscious disposition to lie, wherewith his whole being was permeated, greatly aided him. . . . He had merely wished to tease me; but every word of his trickled like poison through all my veins.—The blood flew to my head.

"Ah! so that 's it!"—I said to myself:—"good! So it was not for nothing that I felt drawn to the garden! That shall not be!" I exclaimed, smiting myself on the breast with my

fist; although I really did not know what it was that I was determined not to permit.—" Whether Malévsky himself comes into the garden,"—I thought (perhaps he had blurted out a secret; he was insolent enough for that),—" or some one else,"—(the fence of our vegetable-garden was very low and it cost no effort to climb over it)—" at any rate, it will be all the worse for the person whom I catch! I would not advise any one to encounter me! I 'll show the whole world and her, the traitress,"—(I actually called her a traitress)—" that I know how to avenge myself!"

I returned to my own room, took out of my writing-table a recently purchased English knife, felt of the sharp blade, and, knitting my brows, thrust it into my pocket with a cold and concentrated decision, exactly as though it was nothing remarkable for me to do such deeds, and this was not the first occasion. My heart swelled angrily within me and grew stony; I did not unbend my brows until nightfall and did not relax my lips, and kept striding back and forth, clutching the knife which had grown warm in my pocket, and preparing myself in advance for something terrible. These new, unprecedented emotions so engrossed and even cheered me, that I thought very little about Zinaída herself. There kept constantly flitting through my head Aleko, the young gipsy:[1]—" Where art thou going, hand-

[1] In Púshkin's poem, "The Gipsies."—TRANSLATOR.

some youth?—Lie down . . . ." and then: " Thou 'rt all with blood bespattered! . . . . Oh, what is 't that thou hast done? . . . Nothing! " With what a harsh smile I repeated that: that " Nothing! "

My father was not at home; but my mother, who for some time past had been in a state of almost constant, dull irritation, noticed my baleful aspect at supper, and said to me:—" What art thou sulking at, like a mouse at groats? "—I merely smiled patronisingly at her by way of reply and thought to myself: " If they only knew! " —The clock struck eleven; I went to my own room but did not undress; I was waiting for midnight; at last it struck.—" 'T is time! "—I hissed between my teeth, and buttoning my coat to the throat and even turning up my sleeves I betook myself to the garden.

I had selected a place beforehand where I meant to stand on guard. At the end of the garden, at the spot where the fence, which separated our property from the Zasyékins', abutted on the party-wall, grew a solitary spruce-tree. Standing beneath its low, thick branches, I could see well, as far as the nocturnal gloom permitted, all that went on around; there also meandered a path which always seemed to me mysterious; like a serpent it wound under the fence, which at that point bore traces of clambering feet, and led to an arbour of dense acacias. I reached the spruce-

tree, leaned against its trunk and began my watch.

The night was as tranquil as the preceding one had been; but there were fewer storm-clouds in the sky, and the outlines of the bushes, even of the tall flowers, were more plainly discernible. The first moments of waiting were wearisome, almost terrible. I had made up my mind to everything; I was merely considering how I ought to act. Ought I to thunder out: "Who goes there? Halt! Confess—or die!"—or simply smite. . . Every sound, every noise and rustling seemed to me significant, unusual . . . . I made ready . . . . I bent forward. . . . . But half an hour, an hour, elapsed; my blood quieted down and turned cold; the consciousness that I was doing all this in vain, that I was even somewhat ridiculous, that Malévsky had been making fun of me, began to steal into my soul. I abandoned my ambush and made the round of the entire garden. As though expressly, not the slightest sound was to be heard anywhere; everything was at rest; even our dog was asleep, curled up in a ball at the gate. I climbed up on the ruin of the hothouse, beheld before me the distant plain, recalled my meeting with Zinaída, and became immersed in meditation. . . . .

I started . . . . I thought I heard the creak of an opening door, then the light crackling of a broken twig. In two bounds I had descended

from the ruin—and stood petrified on the spot. Swift, light but cautious footsteps were plainly audible in the garden. They were coming toward me. "Here he is. . . . Here he is, at last!"—darted through my heart. I convulsively jerked the knife out of my pocket, convulsively opened it—red sparks whirled before my eyes, the hair stood up on my head with fright and wrath. . . . The steps were coming straight toward me—I bent over, and went to meet them. . . . A man made his appearance. . . . My God! It was my father!

I recognised him instantly, although he was all enveloped in a dark cloak,—and had pulled his hat down over his face. He went past me on tiptoe. He did not notice me although nothing concealed me; but I had so contracted myself and shrunk together that I think I must have been on a level with the ground. The jealous Othello, prepared to murder, had suddenly been converted into the school-boy. . . . I was so frightened by the unexpected apparition of my father that I did not even take note, at first, in what direction he was going and where he had disappeared. I merely straightened up at the moment and thought: "Why is my father walking in the garden by night?"—when everything around had relapsed into silence. In my alarm I had dropped my knife in the grass, but I did not even try to find it; I felt very much ashamed. I became so-

bered on the instant. But as I wended my way home, I stepped up to my little bench under the elder-bush and cast a glance at the little window of Zinaída's chamber. The small, somewhat curved panes of the little window gleamed dully blue in the faint light which fell from the night sky. Suddenly their colour began to undergo a change. . . . Behind them—I saw it, saw it clearly,—a whitish shade was lowered, descended to the sill,—and there remained motionless.

"What is the meaning of that?"—I said aloud, almost involuntarily, when I again found myself in my own room.—"Was it a dream, an accident, or . . . ." The surmises which suddenly came into my head were so new and strange that I dared not even yield to them.

## XVIII

I ROSE in the morning with a headache. My agitation of the night before had vanished. It had been replaced by an oppressive perplexity and a certain, hitherto unknown sadness,—exactly as though something had died in me.

"What makes you look like a rabbit which has had half of its brain removed?"—said Lúshin, who happened to meet me. At breakfast I kept casting covert glances now at my father, now at my mother; he was calm, as usual; she, as usual, was secretly irritated. I waited to see whether

my father would address me in a friendly way, as he sometimes did. . . . But he did not even caress me with his cold, everyday affection.—"Shall I tell Zinaída all?"—I thought. . . . "For it makes no difference now—everything is over between us." I went to her, but I not only did not tell her anything,—I did not even get a chance to talk to her as I would have liked. The old Princess's son, a cadet aged twelve, had come from Petersburg to spend his vacation with her; Zinaída immediately confided her brother to me. —"Here, my dear Volódya,"—said she (she called me so for the first time), "is a comrade for you. His name is Volódya also. Pray, like him; he 's a wild little fellow still, but he has a good heart. Show him Neskútchny Park, walk with him, take him under your protection. You will do that, will you not? You, too, are such a good fellow!"—She laid both hands affectionately on my shoulder—and I was reduced to utter confusion. The arrival of that boy turned me into a boy. I stared in silence at the cadet, who riveted his eyes in corresponding silence on me. Zinaída burst out laughing and pushed us toward each other.—"Come, embrace, children!"—We embraced.—"I 'll take you into the garden if you wish,—shall I?"—I asked the cadet.

"Certainly, sir,"—he replied, in a hoarse, genuine cadet voice. Again Zinaída indulged in a burst of laughter. . . . I managed to notice

that never before had she had such charming colour in her face. The cadet and I went off together. In our garden stood an old swing. I seated him on the thin little board and began to swing him. He sat motionless in his new little uniform of thick cloth with broad gold galloon, and clung tightly to the ropes.

"You had better unhook your collar,"—I said to him.

"Never mind, sir,[1] we are used to it, sir,"—he said, and cleared his throat.

He resembled his sister; his eyes were particularly suggestive of her. It was pleasant to me to be of service to him; and, at the same time, that aching pain kept quietly gnawing at my heart. "Now I really am a child," I thought; "but last night . . . . " I remembered where I had dropped my knife and found it. The cadet asked me to lend it to him, plucked a thick stalk of lovage, cut a whistle from it, and began to pipe. Othello piped also.

But in the evening, on the other hand, how he did weep, that same Othello, over Zinaída's hands when, having sought him out in a corner of the garden, she asked him what made him so melancholy. My tears streamed with such violence that she was frightened.—"What is the matter with you? What is the matter with you, Volódya?"

[1] The respectful "s," which is an abbreviation of "sir" or "madam."—TRANSLATOR.

—she kept repeating, and seeing that I made her no reply, she took it into her head to kiss my wet cheek. But I turned away from her and whispered through my sobs:—"I know everything: why have you trifled with me? . . . . Why did you want my love?"

"I am to blame toward you, Volódya" . . . . said Zinaída.—"Akh, I am very much to blame" . . . . . she said, and clenched her hands.—"How much evil, dark, sinful, there is in me! . . . But I am not trifling with you now, I love you—you do not suspect why and how. . . . But what is it you know?"

What could I say to her? She stood before me and gazed at me—and I belonged to her wholly, from head to foot, as soon as she looked at me. . . . A quarter of an hour later I was running a race with the cadet and Zinaída; I was not weeping; I was laughing, although my swollen eyelids dropped tears from laughing; on my neck, in place of a tie, was bound a ribbon of Zinaída's, and I shouted with joy when I succeeded in seizing her round the waist. She did with me whatsoever she would.

## XIX

I SHOULD be hard put to it, if I were made to narrate in detail all that went on within me in the course of the week which followed my unsuccess-

ful nocturnal expedition. It was a strange, feverish time, a sort of chaos in which the most opposite emotions, thoughts, suspicions, hopes, joys, and sufferings revolved in a whirlwind; I was afraid to look into myself, if a sixteen-year-old can look into himself; I was afraid to account to myself for anything whatsoever; I simply made haste to live through the day until the evening; on the other hand, at night I slept . . . childish giddiness helped me. I did not want to know whether I was beloved, and would not admit to myself that I was not beloved; I shunned my father—but could not shun Zinaída. . . . I burned as with fire in her presence, . . . . but what was the use of my knowing what sort of fire it was wherewith I burned and melted—seeing that it was sweet to me to burn and melt! I surrendered myself entirely to my impressions, and dealt artfully with myself, turned away from my memories and shut my eyes to that of which I had a presentiment in the future. . . . This anguish probably would not have continued long . . . a thunder-clap put an instantaneous end to everything and hurled me into a new course.

On returning home one day to dinner from a rather long walk, I learned with surprise that I was to dine alone; that my father had gone away, while my mother was ill, did not wish to dine and had shut herself up in her bedroom. From the footmen's faces I divined that something un-

usual had taken place. . . . I dared not interrogate them, but I had a friend, the young butler Philípp, who was passionately fond of poetry and an artist on the guitar; I applied to him. From him I learned that a frightful scene had taken place between my father and mother (for in the maids' room everything was audible, to the last word; a great deal had been said in French, but the maid Másha had lived for five years with a dressmaker from Paris and understood it all); that my mother had accused my father of infidelity, of being intimate with the young lady our neighbour; that my father had first defended himself, then had flared up and in his turn had made some harsh remark "seemingly about her age," which had set my mother to crying; that my mother had also referred to a note of hand, which appeared to have been given to the old Princess, and expressed herself very vilely about her, and about the young lady as well; and that then my father had threatened her.—"And the whole trouble arose,"—pursued Philípp, "out of an anonymous letter; but who wrote it no one knows; otherwise there was no reason why this affair should have come out."

"But has there been anything?"—I enunciated with difficulty, while my hands and feet turned cold, and something began to quiver in the very depths of my breast.

Philípp winked significantly.—"There has.

You can't conceal such doings, cautious as your papa has been in this case;—still, what possessed him, for example, to hire a carriage, or to . . . . for you can't get along without people there also."

I dismissed Philípp, and flung myself down on my bed. I did not sob, I did not give myself up to despair; I did not ask myself when and how all this had taken place; I was not surprised that I had not guessed it sooner, long before—I did not even murmur against my father. . . . That which I had learned was beyond my strength; this sudden discovery had crushed me. . . . All was over. All my flowers had been plucked up at one blow and lay strewn around me, scattered and trampled under foot.

## XX

On the following day my mother announced that she was going to remove to town. My father went into her bedroom in the morning and sat there a long time alone with her. No one heard what he said to her, but my mother did not weep any more; she calmed down and asked for something to eat, but did not show herself and did not alter her intention. I remember that I wandered about all day long, but did not go into the garden and did not glance even once at the wing—and in the

evening I was the witness of an amazing occurrence; my father took Count Malévsky by the arm and led him out of the hall into the anteroom and, in the presence of a lackey, said coldly to him: "Several days ago Your Radiance was shown the door in a certain house. I shall not enter into explanations with you now, but I have the honour to inform you that if you come to my house again I shall fling you through the window. I don't like your handwriting." The Count bowed, set his teeth, shrank together, and disappeared.

Preparations began for removing to town, on the Arbát,[1] where our house was situated. Probably my father himself no longer cared to remain in the villa; but it was evident that he had succeeded in persuading my mother not to make a row. Everything was done quietly, without haste; my mother even sent her compliments to the old Princess and expressed her regret that, owing to ill-health, she would be unable to see her before her departure. I prowled about like a crazy person, and desired but one thing,—that everything might come to an end as speedily as possible. One thought never quitted my head: how could she, a young girl,—well, and a princess into the bargain,—bring herself to such a step, knowing that my father was not a free man while she had the possibility of marrying Bye-

[1] A square in Moscow.—Translator.

lovzóroff at least, for example? What had she hoped for? How was it that she had not been afraid to ruin her whole future?—"Yes,"—I thought,—"that 's what love is,—that is passion,—that is devotion," . . . and I recalled Lúshin's words to me: "Self-sacrifice is sweet—for some people." Once I happened to catch sight of a white spot in one of the windows of the wing. . . . "Can that be Zinaída's face?"—I thought; . . . and it really was her face. I could not hold out. I could not part from her without bidding her a last farewell. I seized a convenient moment and betook myself to the wing.

In the drawing-room the old Princess received me with her customary, slovenly-careless greeting.

"What has made your folks uneasy so early, my dear fellow?"—she said, stuffing snuff up both her nostrils. I looked at her, and a weight was removed from my heart. The word "note of hand" uttered by Philípp tormented me. She suspected nothing . . . . so it seemed to me then, at least. Zinaída made her appearance from the adjoining room in a black gown, pale, with hair out of curl; she silently took me by the hand and led me away to her room.

"I heard your voice,"—she began,—"and came out at once. And did you find it so easy to desert us, naughty boy?"

"I have come to take leave of you, Princess,"

—I replied,—" probably forever. You may have heard we are going away."

Zinaída gazed intently at me.

" Yes, I have heard. Thank you for coming. I was beginning to think that I should not see you.—Think kindly of me. I have sometimes tormented you; but nevertheless I am not the sort of person you think I am."

She turned away and leaned against the window-casing.

" Really, I am not that sort of person. I know that you have a bad opinion of me."

" I? "

" Yes, you . . . . you."

" I? "—I repeated sorrowfully, and my heart began to quiver as of old, beneath the influence of the irresistible, inexpressible witchery.—" I? Believe me, Zinaída Alexándrovna, whatever you may have done, however you may have tormented me, I shall love and adore you until the end of my life."

She turned swiftly toward me and opening her arms widely, she clasped my head, and kissed me heartily and warmly. God knows whom that long, farewell kiss was seeking, but I eagerly tasted its sweetness. I knew that it would never more be repeated.—" Farewell, farewell! " I kept saying. . . .

She wrenched herself away and left the room. And I withdrew also. I am unable to describe

the feeling with which I retired. I should not wish ever to have it repeated; but I should consider myself unhappy if I had never experienced it.

We removed to town. I did not speedily detach myself from the past, I did not speedily take up my work. My wound healed slowly; but I really had no evil feeling toward my father. On the contrary, he seemed to have gained in stature in my eyes . . . . let the psychologists explain this contradiction as best they may. One day I was walking along the boulevard when, to my indescribable joy, I encountered Lúshin. I liked him for his straightforward, sincere character; and, moreover, he was dear to me in virtue of the memories which he awakened in me. I rushed at him.

"Aha!"—he said, with a scowl.—"Is it you, young man? Come, let me have a look at you. You are still all sallow, and yet there is not the olden trash in your eyes. You look like a man, not like a lap-dog. That 's good. Well, and how are you? Are you working?"

I heaved a sigh. I did not wish to lie, and I was ashamed to tell the truth.

"Well, never mind,"—went on Lúshin,—"don't be afraid. The principal thing is to live in normal fashion and not to yield to impulses. Otherwise, where 's the good? No matter whither the wave bears one—'t is bad; let a man stand on

a stone if need be, but on his own feet. Here I am croaking . . . . but Byelovzóroff—have you heard about him?"

"What about him? No."

"He has disappeared without leaving a trace; they say he has gone to the Caucasus. A lesson to you, young man. And the whole thing arises from not knowing how to say good-bye,—to break bonds in time. You, now, seem to have jumped out successfully. Look out, don't fall in again. Farewell."

"I shall not fall in,"—I thought. . . . "I shall see her no more." But I was fated to see Zinaída once more.

## XXI

My father was in the habit of riding on horseback every day; he had a splendid red-roan English horse, with a long, slender neck and long legs, indefatigable and vicious. Its name was Electric. No one could ride it except my father. One day he came to me in a kindly frame of mind, which had not happened with him for a long time: he was preparing to ride, and had donned his spurs. I began to entreat him to take me with him.

"Let us, rather, play at leap-frog,"—replied my father,—"for thou wilt not be able to keep up with me on thy cob."

"Yes, I shall; I will put on spurs also."

"Well, come along."

We set out. I had a shaggy, black little horse, strong on its feet and fairly spirited; it had to gallop with all its might, it is true, when Electric was going at a full trot; but nevertheless I did not fall behind. I have never seen such a horseman as my father. His seat was so fine and so carelessly-adroit that the horse under him seemed to be conscious of it and to take pride in it. We rode the whole length of all the boulevards, reached the Maidens' Field,[1] leaped over several enclosures (at first I was afraid to leap, but my father despised timid people, and I ceased to be afraid), crossed the Moscow river twice;—and I was beginning to think that we were on our way homeward, the more so as my father remarked that my horse was tired, when suddenly he turned away from me in the direction of the Crimean Ford, and galloped along the shore.—I dashed after him. When he came on a level with a lofty pile of old beams which lay heaped together, he sprang nimbly from Electric, ordered me to alight and, handing me the bridle of his horse, told me to wait for him on that spot, near the beams; then he turned into a narrow alley and dis-

[1] A great plain situated on the outskirts of the town. So called because (says tradition) it was here that annually were assembled the young girls who were sent, in addition to the money tribute, to the Khan, during the Tatár period, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.—TRANSLATOR.

appeared. I began to pace back and forth along the shore, leading the horses after me and scolding Electric, who as he walked kept incessantly twitching his head, shaking himself, snorting and neighing; when I stood still, he alternately pawed the earth with his hoof, and squealed and bit my cob on the neck; in a word, behaved like a spoiled darling, *pur sang*. My father did not return. A disagreeable humidity was wafted from the river; a fine rain set in and mottled the stupid, grey beams, around which I was hovering and of which I was so heartily tired, with tiny, dark spots. Anxiety took possession of me, but still my father did not come. A Finnish sentry, also all grey, with a huge, old-fashioned shako, in the form of a pot, on his head, and armed with a halberd (why should there be a sentry, I thought, on the shores of the Moscow river?), approached me, and turning his elderly, wrinkled face to me, he said:

"What are you doing here with those horses, my little gentleman? Hand them over to me; I 'll hold them."

I did not answer him; he asked me for some tobacco. In order to rid myself of him (moreover, I was tortured by impatience), I advanced a few paces in the direction in which my father had retreated; then I walked through the alley to the very end, turned a corner, and came to a standstill. On the street, forty paces distant from

me, in front of the open window of a small wooden house, with his back to me, stood my father; he was leaning his breast on the window-sill, while in the house, half concealed by the curtain, sat a woman in a dark gown talking with my father: the woman was Zinaída.

I stood rooted to the spot in amazement. I must confess that I had in nowise expected this. My first impulse was to flee. "My father will glance round," I thought,—"and then I am lost." .... But a strange feeling—a feeling more powerful than curiosity, more powerful even than jealousy, more powerful than fear,—stopped me. I began to stare, I tried to hear. My father appeared to be insisting upon something. Zinaída would not consent. I seem to see her face now—sad, serious, beautiful, and with an indescribable imprint of adoration, grief, love, and a sort of despair. She uttered monosyllabic words, did not raise her eyes, and only smiled—submissively and obstinately. From that smile alone I recognised my former Zinaída. My father shrugged his shoulders, and set his hat straight on his head—which was always a sign of impatience with him. ... Then the words became audible: "*Vous devez vous séparer de cette.*" .... Zinaída drew herself up and stretched out her hand. .... Suddenly, before my very eyes, an incredible thing came to pass:—all at once, my father raised the riding-whip, with which he had been lashing the

dust from his coat-tails,—and the sound of a sharp blow on that arm, which was bare to the elbow, rang out. I could hardly keep from shrieking, but Zinaída started, gazed in silence at my father, and slowly raising her arm to her lips, kissed the mark which glowed scarlet upon it.

My father hurled his riding-whip from him, and running hastily up the steps of the porch, burst into the house. . . . Zinaída turned round, and stretching out her arms, and throwing back her head, she also quitted the window.

My heart swooning with terror, and with a sort of alarmed perplexity, I darted backward; and dashing through the alley, and almost letting go of Electric, I returned to the bank of the river. . . I could understand nothing. I knew that my cold and self-contained father was sometimes seized by fits of wild fury; and yet I could not in the least comprehend what I had seen. . . . But I immediately felt that no matter how long I might live, it would be impossible for me ever to forget that movement, Zinaída's glance and smile; that her image, that new image which had suddenly been presented to me, had forever imprinted itself on my memory. I stared stupidly at the river and did not notice that my tears were flowing. " She is being beaten,"—I thought. . . . " She is being beaten . . . . beaten . . . ."

" Come, what ails thee?—Give me my horse! " —rang out my father's voice behind me.

I mechanically gave him the bridle. He sprang upon Electric . . . . the half-frozen horse reared on his hind legs and leaped forward half a fathom . . . . but my father speedily got him under control; he dug his spurs into his flanks and beat him on the neck with his fist. . . . "Ekh, I have no whip,"—he muttered.

I remembered the recent swish through the air and the blow of that same whip, and shuddered.

"What hast thou done with it?"—I asked my father, after waiting a little.

My father did not answer me and galloped on. I dashed after him. I was determined to get a look at his face.

"Didst thou get bored in my absence?"—he said through his teeth.

"A little. But where didst thou drop thy whip?"—I asked him again.

My father shot a swift glance at me.—"I did not drop it,"—he said,—"I threw it away."—He reflected for a space and dropped his head . . . . and then, for the first and probably for the last time, I saw how much tenderness and compunction his stern features were capable of expressing.

He set off again at a gallop, and this time I could not keep up with him; I reached home a quarter of an hour after him.

"That's what love is,"—I said to myself again, as I sat at night before my writing-table,

on which copy-books and text-books had already begun to make their appearance,—" that is what passion is! . . . . How is it possible not to revolt, how is it possible to endure a blow from any one whomsoever . . . . even from the hand that is most dear? But evidently it can be done if one is in love. . . . And I . . . . I imagined . . . ."

The last month had aged me greatly, and my love, with all its agitations and sufferings, seemed to me like something very petty and childish and wretched in comparison with that other unknown something at which I could hardly even guess, and which frightened me like a strange, beautiful but menacing face that one strives, in vain, to get a good look at in the semi-darkness. . . .

That night I had a strange and dreadful dream. I thought I was entering a low, dark room. . . . . My father was standing there, riding-whip in hand, and stamping his feet; Zinaída was crouching in one corner and had a red mark, not on her arm, but on her forehead . . . . and behind the two rose up Byelovzóroff, all bathed in blood, with his pale lips open, and wrathfully menacing my father.

Two months later I entered the university, and six months afterward my father died (of an apoplectic stroke) in Petersburg, whither he had just removed with my mother and myself. A few days before his death my father had received a letter from Moscow which had agitated him ex-

tremely. . . . He went to beg something of my mother and, I was told, even wept,—he, my father! On the very morning of the day on which he had the stroke, he had begun a letter to me in the French language: "My son,"—he wrote to me,—"fear the love of women, fear that happiness, that poison . . . ." After his death my mother sent a very considerable sum of money to Moscow.

## XXII

Four years passed. I had but just left the university, and did not yet quite know what to do with myself, at what door to knock; in the meanwhile, I was lounging about without occupation. One fine evening I encountered Maidánoff in the theatre. He had contrived to marry and enter the government service; but I found him unchanged. He went into unnecessary raptures, just as of old, and became low-spirited as suddenly as ever.

"You know,"—he said to me,—"by the way, that Madame Dólsky is here."

"What Madame Dólsky?"

"Is it possible that you have forgotten? The former Princess Zasyékin, with whom we were all in love, you included. At the villa, near Neskútchny Park, you remember?"

"Did she marry Dólsky?"

"Yes."

"And is she here in the theatre?"

"No, in Petersburg; she arrived here a few days ago; she is preparing to go abroad.

"What sort of a man is her husband?"—I asked.

"A very fine young fellow and wealthy. He 's my comrade in the service, a Moscow man. You understand—after that scandal . . . . you must be well acquainted with all that . . . ." (Maidánoff smiled significantly), "it was not easy for her to find a husband; there were consequences . . . . but with her brains everything is possible. Go to her; she will be delighted to see you. She is handsomer than ever."

Maidánoff gave me Zinaída's address. She was stopping in the Hotel Demuth. Old memories began to stir in me. . . . I promised myself that I would call upon my former "passion" the next day. But certain affairs turned up: a week elapsed, and when, at last, I betook myself to the Hotel Demuth and inquired for Madame Dólsky I learned that she had died four days previously, almost suddenly, in childbirth.

Something seemed to deal me a blow in the heart. The thought that I might have seen her but had not, and that I should never see her,—that bitter thought seized upon me with all the force of irresistible reproach. "Dead!" I repeated, staring dully at the door-porter, then quietly made my way to the street and walked away, with-

out knowing whither. The whole past surged up at one blow and stood before me. And now this was the way it had ended, this was the goal of that young, fiery, brilliant life? I thought that—I pictured to myself those dear features, those eyes, those curls in the narrow box, in the damp, underground gloom,—right there, not far from me, who was still alive, and, perchance, only a few paces from my father. . . . I thought all that, I strained my imagination, and yet—

> From a mouth indifferent I heard the news of death,
> And with indifference did I receive it—

resounded through my soul. O youth, youth! Thou carest for nothing: thou possessest, as it were, all the treasures of the universe; even sorrow comforts thee, even melancholy becomes thee; thou are self-confident and audacious; thou sayest: "I alone live—behold!"—But the days speed on and vanish without a trace and without reckoning, and everything vanishes in thee, like wax in the sun, like snow. . . . And perchance the whole secret of thy charm consists not in the power to do everything, but in the possibility of thinking that thou wilt do everything—consists precisely in the fact that thou scatterest to the winds thy powers which thou hast not understood how to employ in any other way,—in the fact that each one of us seriously regards himself as a prodigal, seriously assumes that he has a right to

say: " Oh, what could I not have done, had I not wasted my time! "

And I myself . . . what did I hope for, what did I expect, what rich future did I foresee, when I barely accompanied with a single sigh, with a single mournful emotion, the spectre of my first love which had arisen for a brief moment?

And what has come to pass of all for which I hoped? Even now, when the shades of evening are beginning to close in upon my life, what is there that has remained for me fresher, more precious than the memory of that morning spring thunder-storm which sped so swiftly past?

But I calumniate myself without cause. Even then, at that frivolous, youthful epoch, I did not remain deaf to the sorrowful voice which responded within me to the triumphant sound which was wafted to me from beyond the grave. I remember that a few days after I learned of Zinaída's death I was present, by my own irresistible longing, at the death-bed of a poor old woman who lived in the same house with us. Covered with rags, with a sack under her head, she died heavily and with difficulty. Her whole life had been passed in a bitter struggle with daily want; she had seen no joy, she had not tasted the honey of happiness—it seemed as though she could not have failed to rejoice at death, at her release, her repose. But nevertheless, as long as her decrepit body held out, as long as her breast

heaved under the icy hand which was laid upon it, until her last strength deserted her, the old woman kept crossing herself and whispering:—"O Lord, forgive my sins,"—and only with the last spark of consciousness did there vanish from her eyes the expression of fear and horror at her approaching end. And I remember that there, by the bedside of that poor old woman, I felt terrified for Zinaída, and felt like praying for her, for my father—and for myself.

# A CORRESPONDENCE

(1855)

# A CORRESPONDENCE

SEVERAL years ago I was in Dresden. I stopped in the hotel. As I was running about the town from early morning until late at night, I did not consider it necessary to make acquaintance with my neighbours; at last, accidentally, it came to my knowledge that there was a sick Russian in the house. I went to him, and found a man in the last stage of consumption. Dresden was beginning to pall upon me; I settled down with my new acquaintance. It is wearisome to sit with an invalid, but even boredom is agreeable sometimes; moreover, my invalid was not dejected, and liked to chat. We endeavoured, in every way, to kill time: we played "fool" together, we jeered at the doctor. My compatriot narrated to that very bald German divers fictions about his own condition, which the doctor always "had long foreseen"; he mimicked him when he was surprised at any unprecedented attack, flung his medicine out of the window, and so forth.

Nevertheless I repeatedly remarked to my friend that it would not be a bad idea to send for a good physician before it was too late, that his malady was not to be jested with, and so forth.

But Alexyéi (my acquaintance's name was Alexyéi Petróvitch S***) put me off every time with jests about all doctors in general, and his own in particular, and at last, one stormy autumn evening, to my importunate entreaties, he replied with such a dejected glance, he shook his head so sadly, and smiled so strangely, that I felt a certain surprise. That same night Alexyéi grew worse, and on the following day he died. Just before his death his customary cheerfulness deserted him: he tossed uneasily in the bed, sighed, gazed anxiously about . . . . grasped my hand, whispered with an effort: " 'T is difficult to die, you know," . . . . dropped his head on the pillow, and burst into tears. I did not know what to say to him, and sat silently beside his bed. But Alexyéi speedily conquered this last, belated compassion. . . . " Listen," he said to me:—" our doctor will come to-day, and will find me dead. . . . . I can imagine his phiz " . . . . and the dying man tried to mimic him. . . . . He requested me to send all his things to Russia, to his relatives, with the exception of a small packet, which he presented to me as a souvenir.

This packet contained letters—the letters of a young girl to Alexyéi and his letters to her. There were fifteen of them in all. Alexyéi Petróvitch S*** had known Márya Alexándrovna B*** for a long time—from childhood, apparently. Alexyéi Petróvitch had a cousin, and Má-

rya Alexándrovna had a sister. In earlier years they had all lived together, then they had dispersed, and had not met again for a long time; then they had accidentally all assembled again in the country, in summer, and had fallen in love—Alexyéi's cousin with Márya Alexándrovna, and Alexyéi himself with the latter's sister. Summer passed and autumn came; they parted. Alexyéi being a sensible man, speedily became convinced that he was not in the least beloved, and parted from his beauty very happily; his cousin corresponded with Márya Alexándrovna for a couple of years longer . . . . but even he divined, at last, that he was deceiving both her and himself in the most unconscionable manner, and he also fell silent.

I should like to tell you a little about Márya Alexándrovna, dear reader, but you will learn to know her for yourself from her letters. Alexyéi wrote his first letter to her soon after her definitive breach with his cousin. He was in Petersburg at the time, suddenly went abroad, fell ill in Dresden and died. I have decided to publish his correspondence with Márya Alexándrovna, and I hope for some indulgence on the part of the reader, because these are not love-letters—God forbid! Love-letters are generally read by two persons only (but, on the other hand, a thousand times in succession), and are intolerable, if not ridiculous, to a third person.

# A CORRESPONDENCE

## I

### *From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna*

St. Petersburg, March 7, 1840.

My dear Márya Alexándrovna!

I have never yet written to you a single time, I think, and here I am writing now. . . . I have chosen a strange time, have I not? This is what has prompted me to it: *Mon cousin Théodore* has been to see me to-day, and—how shall I say it? . . . . and has informed me, in the strictest privacy (he never imparts anything in any other way), that he is in love with the daughter of some gentleman here, and this time is bent on marrying without fail, and that he has already taken the first step—he has explained his intentions! As a matter of course, I hastened to congratulate him on an event so pleasant for him; he has long stood in need of an explanation . . . . but inwardly I was, I confess, somewhat amazed. Although I knew that everything was over between you, yet it seemed to me . . . . In a word, I was amazed. I was preparing to go out visiting to-day, but I have remained at home, and intend to have a little chat with you. If you do not care to listen to me, throw this letter into the fire immediately. I declare to you that I wish to be frank,

although I feel that you have a perfect right to take me for a decidedly-intrusive man. Observe, however, that I would not have taken pen in hand if I had not known that your sister is not with you: Théodore told me that she will be away all summer visiting your aunt, Madame B***. May God grant her all good things!

So, then, this is the way it has all turned out. . . But I shall not offer you my friendship, and so forth; in general, I avoid solemn speeches, and "intimate" effusions. In beginning to write this letter, I have simply obeyed some momentary impulse: if any other feeling is hiding within me, let it remain hidden from sight for the present.

Neither shall I attempt to console you. In consoling others, people generally desire to rid themselves, as speedily as possible, of the unpleasant feeling of involuntary, self-conceited compassion. . . . . I understand sincere, warm sympathy . . . . but such sympathy is not to be got from every one. . . . Please be angry with me. . . If you are angry, you will probably read my epistle to the end.

But what right have I to write to you, to talk about my friendship, my feelings, about consolation? None whatever—positively, none whatever; and I am bound to admit that, and I rely solely upon your kindness.

Do you know what the beginning of my letter resembles? This: a certain Mr. N. N. entered the

drawing-room of a lady who was not in the least expecting him,—who, perhaps, was expecting another man. . . . He divined that he had come at the wrong time, but there was nothing to be done. . . . He sat down, and began to talk . . . . God knows what about: poetry, the beauties of nature, the advantages of a good education . . . . in a word, he talked the most frightful nonsense. . . . But in the meanwhile the first five minutes had elapsed; he sat on; the lady resigned herself to her fate, and lo! Mr. N. N. recovered himself, sighed, and began to converse—to the best of his ability.

But, despite all this idle chatter, I feel somewhat awkward, nevertheless. I seem to see before me your perplexed, even somewhat angry face: I feel conscious that it is almost impossible for you not to assume that I have some secret intentions or other, and therefore, having perpetrated a piece of folly, like a Roman I wrap myself in my toga and await in silence your ultimate condemnation. . . .

But, in particular: Will you permit me to continue to write to you?

I remain sincerely and cordially your devoted servant—

ALEXYÉI S***.

## II

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch*

Village of . . . . no, March 22, 1840.

Dear Sir!

Alexyéi Petróvitch!

I have received your letter, and really, I do not know what to say to you. I would even not have answered you at all had it not seemed to me that beneath your jests was concealed a decidedly-friendly sentiment. Your letter has produced an unpleasant impression on me. In reply to your "idle chatter," as you put it, permit me also to propound to you one question: To what end? What have you to do with me, what have I to do with you? I do not assume any evil intentions on your part, . . . . on the contrary, I am grateful to you for your sympathy, . . . . but we are strangers to each other, and I now, at all events, feel not the slightest desire to become intimate with any one whomsoever.

With sincere respects I remain, and so forth,

Márya B***.

## III

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna*

St. Petersburg, March 30.

I thank you, Márya Alexándrovna, I thank you for your note, curt as it is. All this time I have been in a state of great agitation; twenty times a day I have thought of you and of my letter. You can imagine how caustically I have laughed at myself; but now I am in a capital frame of mind, and am patting myself on the head. Márya Alexándrovna, I am entering into correspondence with you! Confess that you could not possibly have expected that after your reply; I am amazed at my own audacity . . . . never mind! But calm yourself: I want to talk to you not about myself, but about you. Here, do you see: I find it imperatively necessary —to speak in antiquated style—to express myself to some one. I have no right to select you for my confidante—I admit that; but hearken: I demand from you no reply to my epistles; I do not even wish to know whether you will peruse my "idle chatter," but do not send me back my letters, in the name of all that is holy!

Listen—I am utterly alone on earth. In my youth I led a solitary life, although, I remember,

I never pretended to be a Byron; but, in the first place, circumstances, in the second place, the ability to dream and a love for reverie, rather cold blood, pride, indolence—in a word, a multitude of varied causes alienated me from the society of men. The transition from a dreamy to an active life was effected in me late . . . perhaps too late, perhaps to this day not completely. So long as my own thoughts and feelings diverted me, so long as I was capable of surrendering myself to causeless silent raptures, and so forth, I did not complain of my isolation. I had no comrades—I did have so-called friends. Sometimes I needed their presence as an electrical machine needs a discharger—that was all. Love . . . . we will be silent on that subject for the present. But now, I confess, now loneliness weighs upon me, and yet I see no escape from my situation. I do not blame Fate; I alone am to blame, and I am justly chastised. In my youth one thing alone interested me: my charming ego; I took my good-natured self-love for shyness; I shunned society, and lo! now I am frightfully bored with myself. What is to become of me? I love no one; all my friendships with other people are, somehow, strained and false; and I have no memories, because in all my past life, I find nothing except my own self. Save me! I have not made you enthusiastic vows of love; I have not deafened you with a torrent of chattering speeches; I have passed you by

with considerable coldness, and precisely for that reason I have made up my mind now to have recourse to you. (I had thought of this even earlier, but you were not free then. . . . .) Out of all my self-made joys and sufferings, the sole genuine feeling was the small, but involuntary attraction to you, which withered then, like a solitary ear of grain amid worthless weeds. . . . Allow me, at least, to look into another face, another soul,—my own face has grown repugnant to me; I am like a man who has been condemned to live out his entire life in a room with walls made of mirrors. . . . I do not demand any confessions from you—oh, heavens, no! Grant me the speechless sympathy of a sister, or at least the simple curiosity of a reader—I will interest you, really, I will.

At any rate, I have the honour to be your sincere friend,

A. S.

## IV

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna*

PETERSBURG, April 7th.

I write again to you, although I foresee that, without your approval, I shall speedily hold my peace. I must admit that you cannot fail to feel a certain distrust of me. What of that? Perhaps

you are right. Formerly I would have declared to you (and, probably, would have believed my own words) that, since we parted, I had "developed," had advanced; with condescending, almost affectionate scorn I would have referred to my past; with touching boastfulness I would have initiated you into the secrets of my present, active life . . . . but now, I assure you, Márya Alexándrovna, I consider it shameful and disgusting to allude to the way in which my vile self-love once on a time fermented and amused itself. Fear not: I shall not force upon you any great truths, any profound views; I have none—none of those truths and views. I have become a nice fellow,—truly I have. I 'm bored, Márya Alexándrovna—so bored that I can endure it no longer. That is why I am writing to you. . . . Really, it seems to me that we can come to an agreement. . . . .

However, I positively am in no condition to talk to you until you stretch out your hand to me, until I receive from you a note with the one word "Yes."—Márya Alexándrovna, will you hear me out?—that is the question.

Yours truly,

A. S.

## V

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch*

VILLAGE OF . . . . NO, April 14.

What a strange man you are! Well, then—"yes."

MÁRYA B***.

## VI

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna*

PETERSBURG, May 2, 1840.

Hurrah! Thanks, Márya Alexándrovna, thanks! You are a very kind and indulgent being.

I begin, according to my promise, to speak of myself, and I shall speak with pleasure, verging on appetite. . . . Precisely that. One may talk of everything in the world with fervour, with rapture, with enthusiasm, but only of one's self can one talk with appetite.

Listen: an extremely strange incident happened to me the other day: I took a glance at my past for the first time. You will understand me: every one of us frequently recalls the past—with

compunction or with vexation, or simply for the lack of something to do; but only at a certain age can one cast a cold, clear glance at his whole past life—as a traveller, turning round, gazes from a lofty mountain upon the plain which he has traversed . . . . and a secret chill grips the heart of a man when this happens to him for the first time. At any rate, my heart contracted with pain. So long as we are young, that sort of looking backward is impossible. But my youth is over—and, like the traveller on the mountain, everything has become clearly visible to me. . . .

Yes, my youth is gone, gone irrevocably! . . . Here it lies before me, all of it, as though in the palm of my hand. . . .

'T is not a cheerful spectacle! I confess to you, Márya Alexándrovna, that I am very sorry for myself. My God! My God! Is it possible that I myself have ruined my own life to such a degree, have so ruthlessly entangled and tortured myself? . . . Now I have come to my senses, but it is too late. Have you ever rescued a fly from a spider? You have? Do you remember, you placed it in the sunshine; its wings, its legs were stuck together, glued fast. . . . How awkwardly it moved, how clumsily it tried to clean itself! . . . After long-continued efforts, it got itself to rights, after a fashion; it crawled, it tried to put its wings in order . . . . but it could not walk as it formerly did; it could not buzz,

care-free, in the sunshine, now flying through an open window into a cool room, again fluttering freely out into the hot air. . . . It, at all events, did not fall into the dreadful net of its own free will . . . . but I!

I was my own spider.

And, nevertheless, I cannot blame myself so very much. Yes, and who—tell me, for mercy's sake—who ever was to blame for anything—alone? Or, to put it more accurately, we are all to blame, yet it is impossible to blame us. Circumstances settle our fate: they thrust us into this road or that, and then they punish us. Every man has his fate. . . . Wait, wait! There occurs to my mind on this score an artfully-constructed but just comparison. As clouds are first formed by the exhalations from the earth, rise up from its bosom, then separate themselves from it, withdraw from it, and bear over it either blessings or ruin, just so around each one of us and from us ourselves is formed—how shall I express it?—is formed a sort of atmosphere which afterward acts destructively or salutarily upon us ourselves. This I call Fate. . . . In other words, and to put it simply: each person makes his own fate, and it makes each person. . . .

Each person makes his own fate—yes! . . . but our brethren make it far too much—which constitutes our calamity! Consciousness is aroused in us too early; too early do we begin to

observe ourselves. . . . We Russians have no other life-problem than the cultivation of our personality, and here we, barely adult children, already undertake to cultivate it, this our unhappy personality! Without having received from within any definite direction, in reality respecting nothing, believing firmly in nothing, we are free to make of ourselves whatsoever we will. . . . . But it is impossible to demand of every man that he shall immediately comprehend the sterility of a mind, "seething in empty activity" . . . . and so, there is one more monster in the world, one more of those insignificant beings in which the habits of self-love distort the very striving after truth, and ridiculous ingenuousness lives side by side with pitiful guile . . . . one of those beings to whose impotent, uneasy thought there remains forever unknown either the satisfaction of natural activity, or the genuine suffering, or the genuine triumph of conviction. . . . Combining in itself the defects of all ages, we deprive each defect of its good, its redeeming side. . . . We are as stupid as children, but we are not sincere like them; we are as cold as old men, but the common sense of old age is not in us. . . On the other hand, we are psychologists. Oh, yes, we are great psychologists! But our psychology strays off into pathology; our psychology is an artful study of the laws of a diseased condition and a diseased development, with

which healthy people have no concern. . . . But the chief thing is, we are not young,—in youth itself we are not young!

And yet—why calumniate one's self? Have we really never been young? Have the vital forces never sparkled, never seethed, never quivered in us? Yet we have been in Arcadia, and we have roved its bright meads! . . . Have you ever happened, while strolling among bushes, to hit upon those dark-hued harvest-flies, which, springing out from under your very feet, suddenly expand their bright red wings with a clatter, flutter on a few paces, and then tumble into the grass again? Just so did our dark youth sometimes expand its gaily-coloured little wings for a few moments, and a brief flight. . . . Do you remember our silent evening rambles, the four of us together, along the fence of your park, after some long, warm, animated conversation? Do you remember those gracious moments? Nature received us affectionately and majestically into her lap. We entered, with sinking heart, into some sort of blissful waves. Round about the glow of sunset kindled with sudden and tender crimson; from the crimsoning sky, from the illuminated earth, from everywhere, it seemed as though the fresh and fiery breath of youth were wafted abroad, and the joyous triumph of some immortal happiness; the sunset glow blazed; like it, softly and passionately blazed our enraptured hearts, and

the tiny leaves of the young trees quivered sensitively and confusedly above us, as though replying to the inward tremulousness of the indistinct feelings and anticipations within us. Do you remember that purity, that kindness and trustfulness of ideas, that emotion of noble hopes, that silence of plenitude? Can it be that we were not then worthy of something better than that to which life has conducted us? Why have we been fated only at rare intervals to catch sight of the longed-for shore, and never to stand thereon with firm foothold, never to touch it—

> Not to weep sweetly, like the first of the Jews
> On the borders of the Promised Land?

These two lines of Fet[1] have reminded me of others,—also by him. . . . Do you remember how one day, as we were standing in the road, we beheld in the distance a cloud of rosy dust, raised by a light breeze, against the setting sun? "In a billowy cloud" you began, and we all fell silent on the instant, and set to listening:

> In a billowy cloud
> The dust rises in the distance. . . .
> Whether horseman or pedestrian—
> Cannot be descried for the dust.

[1] Afanásy Afanásievitch Shénshin (1820–1892) always wrote under this name.—Translator.

I see some one galloping
On a spirited steed. . . .
My friend, my distant friend—
Remember me!

You ceased. . . . All of us fairly shuddered, as though the breath of love had flitted over our hearts, and each one of us—I am convinced of that—longed inexpressibly to flee away in the distance, that unknown distance, where the apparition of bliss rises up and beckons athwart the mist. And yet, observe this odd thing: why should we reach out into the distance?—we thought. Were not we in love with each other? Was not happiness " so near, so possible " ? And I immediately asked you: " Why have not we gained the shore we long for? " Because falsehood was walking hand in hand with us; because it was poisoning our best sentiments; because everything in us was artificial and strained; because we did not love each other at all, and only tried to love, imagined that we did love. . . . .

But enough, enough! Why irritate one's wounds? Moreover, all that is past irrevocably. That which was good in our past has touched me, and on this good I bid you farewell for the time being. And it is time to end this long letter. I will go and inhale the May air here, in which, through the winter's stern fortress, the spring is forcing its way with a sort of moist and keen warmth. Farewell. A. S.

## VII

### *From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch*

VILLAGE OF . . . . NO, May 20, 1840.

I have received your letter, Alexyéi Petróvitch, and do you know what feeling it aroused in me? —Indignation . . . . yes, indignation . . . . . and I will immediately explain to you why it aroused precisely that feeling in me. One thing is a pity: I am not a mistress of the pen—I rarely write. I do not know how to express my thoughts accurately and in a few words; but you will, I hope, come to my aid. You yourself will try to understand me: if only for the sake of knowing why I am angry with you.

Tell me—you are a clever man—have you ever asked yourself what sort of a creature a Russian woman is? What is her fate, her position in the world—in short, what her life is like? I do not know whether you have ever had time to put that question to yourself; I cannot imagine how you would answer it. . . . I might, in conversation, be able to communicate to you my ideas on that subject, but I shall hardly manage it on paper. However, it makes no difference. This is the point: you surely will agree with me that we women—at all events, those of us who are not

satisfied with the ordinary cares of domestic life —receive our final education, all the same, from you—from the men: you have a great and powerful influence on us. Look, now, at what you do with us. I shall speak of the young girls, especially of those who, like myself, dwell in the dull places, and there are many such in Russia. Moreover, I do not know others, and cannot judge with regard to them. Figure to yourself such a young girl. Here, now, her education is finished; she is beginning to live, to amuse herself. But amusement alone is not enough for her. She demands a great deal from life; she reads, dreams . . . . of love.—"Always of love alone!" you will say. . . . Let us assume that that word means a great deal to her. I will say again that I am not talking of the sort of girl who finds it burdensome and tiresome to think. . . . She looks about her, waits for the coming of him for whom her soul pines. . . . . At last he makes his appearance: she is carried away; she is like soft wax in his hands. Everything—happiness, and love, and thought—everything has invaded her together with him, all at once; all her tremors are soothed, all her doubts are solved by him; truth itself seems to speak by his mouth; she worships him, she is ashamed of her happiness, she learns, she loves. Great is his power over her at this period! . . . . If he were a hero, he would kindle her to flame, he would teach her to sacrifice her-

self, and all sacrifices would be easy to her! But there are no heroes in our day. . . . Nevertheless, he guides her whithersoever he will; she devotes herself to that which interests him, his every word sinks into her soul: at that time, she does not know, as yet, how insignificant and empty and false that word may be, how little it costs him who utters it, and how little faith it merits! These first moments of bliss and hope are followed, generally—according to circumstances—(circumstances are always to blame)—are followed by parting. It is said that there have been cases where two kindred souls, on recognising each other, have immediately united indissolubly; I have heard, also, that they are not always comfortable as a result. . . . But I will not speak of that which I have not myself beheld—but that the very pettiest sort of calculation, the most woful prudence, may dwell in a young heart side by side with the most passionate rapture,—that is a fact which, unhappily, I know by my own experience. So, then, parting comes. . . . Happy is that young girl who instantly recognises that the end of all has come, who does not comfort herself with expectation! But you brave, just men, in the majority of cases, have neither the courage nor the desire to tell us the truth . . . . you find it more easy to deceive us. . . . I am ready to believe, however, that you deceive yourselves along with us. . . . Parting! It is both

difficult and easy to endure parting. If only faith in him whom one loves were intact and unassailed, the soul would conquer the pain of parting. . . . . I will say more: only when she is left alone does she learn the sweetness of solitude, not sterile but filled with memories and thoughts. Only then will she learn to know herself—will she come to herself, will she grow strong. . . . . In the letters of the distant friend she will find a support for herself; in her own she will, perhaps, for the first time, express her mind fully. . . . But as two persons who have started from the source of a river along its different banks can, at first, clasp hands, then hold communication only with the voice, but ultimately lose sight of each other: so also two beings are ultimately disjoined by separation. "What of that?" you will say: "evidently they were not fated to go together. . . ." But here comes in the difference between a man and a woman. It signifies nothing to a man to begin a new life, to shake far from him the past; a woman cannot do that. No, she cannot cast aside her past, she cannot tear herself away from her roots—no, a thousand times no! And so, a pitiful and ridiculous spectacle presents itself. . . . Gradually losing hope and faith in herself,—you can form no idea of how painful that is,—she will pine away and fade alone, obstinately clinging to her memories, and turning away from everything which life around her offers. . . . . And he? . . . . Seek him! Where is he? And

is it worth while for him to pause? What time has he for looking back? All this is a thing of the past for him, you see.

Or here is another thing which happens: it sometimes happens that he will suddenly conceive a desire to meet the former object of his affections, he will even deliberately go to her. . . . But, my God! from what a motive of petty vain-glory he does it! In his polite compassion, in his counsels which are intended to be friendly, in his condescending explanations of the past, there is audible such a consciousness of his own superiority! It is so agreeable and cheerful a thing for him to let himself feel every minute how sensible and kind he is! And how little he understands what he is doing! How well he manages not even to guess at what is going on in the woman's heart, and how insultingly he pities her, if he does guess it! . . .

Tell me, please, whence are we to get the strength to endure all this? Remember this, too: in the majority of cases, a girl who, to her misfortune, has an idea beginning to stir in her head, when she begins to love, and falls under the influence of a man, involuntarily separates herself from her family, from her acquaintances. Even previously she has not been satisfied with their life, yet she has walked on by their side, preserving in her soul all her intimate secrets. . . . But the breach speedily makes itself visible. . . . They cease to understand her, they are ready to suspect

every movement of hers. . . . At first she pays no heed to this, but afterward, afterward . . . . when she is left alone, when that toward which she has been striving and for which she has sacrificed everything escapes her grasp, when she has not attained to heaven, but when every near thing, every possible thing, has retreated far from her —what shall uphold her? Sneers, hints, the vulgar triumph of coarse common sense she can still bear, after a fashion . . . . but what is she to do, to what is she to have recourse, when the inward voice begins to whisper to her that all those people were right, and that she has been mistaken; that life, of whatever sort it may be, is better than dreams, as health is better than disease . . . . when her favourite occupations, her favourite books, disgust her, the books from which one cannot extract happiness,—what, say you,—what shall uphold her? How is she to help succumbing in such a struggle? How is she to live and to go on living in such a wilderness? Confess herself vanquished, and extend her hand like a beggar to indifferent people? Will not they give her at least some of that happiness with which the proud heart once imagined that it could dispense—all that is nothing as yet! But to feel one's self ridiculous at the very moment when one is shedding bitter, bitter tears . . . . akh! God forbid that you should go through that experience! . . . .

My hands are trembling, and I am in a fever all over. . . . My face is burning hot. It is time for me to stop. . . . I shall send off this letter as speedily as possible, while I am not ashamed of my weakness. But, for God's sake, not a word in your reply—do you hear me?—not a word of pity, or I will never write to you again. Understand me: I should not like to have you take this letter as the outpouring of a misunderstood soul which is making complaint. . . Akh! it is all a matter of indifference to me! Farewell.

M.

## VIII

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna*

St. Petersburg, May 28, 1840.

Márya Alexándrovna, you are a fine creature .... indeed you are . . . your letter has disclosed to me the truth at last! O Lord my God! what torture! A man is constantly thinking that now he has attained simplicity, no longer shows off, puts on airs, or lies .... but when you come to look at him more attentively, he has become almost worse than he was before. And this must be noted: the man himself, alone that is to say, will never attain to that consciousness, bestir himself as he may! his eye will not discern his own de-

fects, just as the blunted eye of the printer will not detect errors: another, a fresher eye is required. I thank you, Márya Alexándrovna. . . . You see, I am speaking to you of myself; I dare not speak of you. . . . Akh, how ridiculous my last letter seems to me now,—so eloquent and sentimental! Go on, I beg of you, with your confession; I have a premonition that you will be relieved thereby, and it will be of great benefit to me. Not without cause does the proverb say: "A woman's wit is better than many thoughts"; and a woman's heart is far more so—God is my witness that it is so! If women only knew how much better, and more magnanimous, and clever—precisely that—clever they are than the men, they would grow puffed up with pride, and get spoiled: but, fortunately, they do not know that; they do not know it because their thoughts have not become accustomed to returning incessantly to themselves, as have the thoughts of us men. They think little about themselves—that is their weakness and their strength; therein lies the whole secret—I will not say of our superiority, but of our power. They squander their souls, as a lavish heir squanders his father's gold, but we collect interest from every look. . . . How can they enter into rivalry with us? . . . All this is not compliments, but the simple truth, demonstrated by experience. Again I entreat you, Márya Alexándrovna, to continue writing to me.

. . . If you only knew all that comes into my mind! . . But now I do not want to talk, I want to listen to you. . . . My speech will come later on. Write, write.

Yours truly,
A. S.

## IX

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch*

Village of . . . . no, June 12, 1840.

No sooner had I despatched my last letter to you, Alexyéi Petróvitch, than I repented of it; but there was no help for it. One thing somewhat soothed me: I am convinced that you have understood under the influence of what long-suppressed feelings it was written, and have forgiven me. I did not even read over at the time what I had written to you; I remember that my heart was beating so violently that my pen trembled in my hand. However, although I probably should have expressed myself differently if I had given myself time to think it over, still I have no intention of disclaiming either my words or the feelings which I have imparted to you to the best of my ability. To-day I am much more cool-headed, and have far better control over myself. . . .

I remember that I spoke toward the end of my

letter about the painful situation of the young girl who recognises the fact that she is isolated even among her own people. . . . I will not enlarge further on that point, but rather will I communicate to you a few details; it seems to me that I shall bore you less in that way.

In the first place, you must know that throughout the whole country-side I am not called anything but "the female philosopher"; the ladies, in particular, allude to me by that name. Some assert that I sleep with a Latin book in my hands and in spectacles; others, that I know how to extract some cubic roots or other: not one of them cherishes any doubt that I wear masculine attire on the sly, and that instead of "good morning," I say abruptly: "Georges Sand!"—and indignation against "the female philosopher" is on the increase. We have a neighbour, a man of five-and-forty, a great wit, . . . . at least, he has the reputation of being a great wit, . . . . and for him my poor person is an inexhaustible subject for jeers. He has related, concerning me, that as soon as the moon rises in the sky, I cannot take my eyes from it, and he shows how I look; that I even drink coffee not with cream but with the moon, that is to say, I set my cup in its rays. He swears that I use phrases in the nature of the following: "That is easy because it is difficult; although, on the other hand, it is difficult because it is easy."

. . . He declares that I am always seeking some word or other, always yearning "thither," and he inquires, with comic indignation: "Whither is thither? Whither?" He has also set in circulation about me a rumour to the effect that I ride by night on horseback back and forth through the ford of the river, singing the while Schubert's "Serenade," or simply moaning: "Beethoven, Beethoven!" as much as to say—"She 's such a fiery old woman!" and so forth, and so forth. Of course, all this immediately reaches my ears. Perhaps this may surprise you; but do not forget that four years have elapsed since you have sojourned in these parts. Remember how every one gazed askance at us then. . . . Now their turn has come. And all this is nothing. I sometimes happen to hear words which pierce my heart much more painfully. I will not mention the fact that my poor, good mother cannot possibly pardon me for your cousin's indifference; but all my life runs through the fire, as my old nurse expresses it. "Of course,"—I hear constantly,—"how are we to keep up with thee? We are plain folks, we are guided only by common sense; but, after all, when one comes to think of it, to what have all these philosophisings and books and acquaintances with learned people brought thee?" Perhaps you remember my sister—not the one to whom you were formerly not indifferent, but the other,

the elder, who is married. Her husband, you will remember, is a decidedly-ridiculous man; you often used to make fun of him in those days. Yet she is happy: the mother of a family, she loves her husband, and her husband adores her. . . . "I am like all the rest,"—she says to me sometimes; —"but how about thee?" And she is right: I envy her. . . .

And nevertheless I feel that I should not like to change places with her. Let them call me "a female philosopher," "an eccentric," whatever they choose—I shall remain faithful to the end . . . . to what?—to an ideal, pray? Yes, to an ideal. Yes, I shall remain faithful to the end to that which first made my heart beat,—to that which I have acknowledged and do acknowledge to be the true, the good. If only my strength does not fail me, if only my idol does not prove a soulless block. . . .

If you really do feel friendship for me, if you really have not forgotten me, you must help me; you must disperse my doubts, strengthen my beliefs. . . .

But what aid can you render me? "All this is nonsense, like the useless running of a squirrel on a wheel," said my uncle to me yesterday—I think you do not know him—a retired naval officer, and a far from stupid man. "A husband, children, a pot of buckwheat groats: to tend husband and children, and look after the pot of groats—that 's

what a woman needs." . . . Tell me, he is right, is he not?

If he really is right, I can still repair the past, I can still get into the common rut. What else is there for me to wait for? What is there to hope for? In one of your letters, you spoke of the wings of youth. How often, how long they remain fettered! And then comes a time, when they fall off; and it is no longer possible to raise one's self above the earth, to soar heavenward. Write to me.

Yours, M.

## X

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna*

St. Petersburg, June 16, 1840.

I hasten to answer your letter, my dear Márya Alexándrovna. I will confess to you that if it were not for . . . . I will not say business—I have none—if it were not for my being so stupidly habituated to this place, I would go again to you and would talk my fill, but on paper all this comes out so coldly, in such a dead manner. . . .

I repeat to you, Márya Alexándrovna: women are better than men, and you ought to demonstrate that in deed. Let us men fling aside our

convictions, like a worn-out garment, or barter them for a morsel of bread, or, in conclusion, let them fall into the sleep which knows no waking, and place over them, as over one formerly beloved, a tombstone, to which one goes only now and then to pray—let us men do all that; but do not you women be false to yourselves, do not betray your ideal. . . . That word has become ridiculous. . . . To be afraid of the ridiculous is not to love the truth. It does happen, it is true, that a stupid laugh will make the stupid man, even good people, renounce a great deal . . . . take for example the defence of an absent friend. . . . I am guilty in that respect myself. But, I repeat it, you women are better than we are. . . . In trifles you are inclined to yield to us; but you understand better than we do how to look the devil straight in the eye. I shall give you neither aid nor advice—how can I? and you do not need it; but I do stretch forth my hand to you, and I do say to you: "Have patience; fight until the end; and know that, as a feeling, the consciousness of a battle honourably waged almost transcends the triumph of victory." . . . . The victory does not depend upon us.

Of course, from a certain point of view, your uncle is right: family life is everything for a woman; there is no other life for her.

But what does that prove? Only the Jesuits assert that every means is good, if only one at-

tains his end. It is not true! not true! It is an indignity to enter a clean temple with feet soiled with the mire of the road. At the end of your letter there is a phrase which I do not like: you want to get into the common rut. Look out—do not make a misstep! Do not forget, moreover, that it is impossible to efface the past; and strive as you may, force yourself as you will, you cannot make yourself your sister. You have ascended above her. But your soul is broken, hers is intact. You can lower yourself, bend down to her, but nature will not resign her rights, and the broken place will not grow together again. . . .

You are afraid—let us speak without circumlocution—you are afraid of remaining an old maid. I know that you are already twenty-six years old. As a matter of fact, the position of old maids is not enviable: every one so gladly laughs at them; every one notes their oddities and their weaknesses with such unmagnanimous delight. But if you scan more closely any elderly bachelor,—he deserves to have the finger of scorn pointed at him also,—you will find in him cause to laugh your fill. What is to be done? Happiness is not to be captured by battle. But we must not forget that not happiness but human dignity is the chief goal of life.

You describe your position with great humour. I well understand all its bitterness; your position may, I am sure, be called tragic. But you must

know that you are not the only one who finds herself in it: there is hardly any man of the present day who does not find himself in it also. You will say that that does not make it any the easier for you; but what I think is that to suffer in company with thousands is quite a different thing from suffering alone. It is not a question of egotism here, but of a feeling of universal necessity.

"All this is very fine, let us assume," you will say, . . . "but, in point of fact, it is not applicable to the case." Why is it not applicable? Up to the present day I think, and I hope that I shall never cease to think, that in God's world everything honest, good, and true is applicable, and sooner or later will be fulfilled; and not only will be fulfilled, but is already being fulfilled, if each one will only hold himself firmly in his place, will not lose patience, will not desire the impossible, but will act, so far as his strength permits. But I think I have given myself up too much to abstractions. I will defer the continuation of my arguments until another letter; but I do not wish to lay down my pen without having pressed your hand warmly, very warmly, and wished you, with all my soul, everything that is good on earth.

Yours, A. S.

P.S. By the way, you say that you have nothing to look forward to, nothing to hope for; how do you know that, allow me to ask?

## XI

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch*

Village of . . . . no, June 30, 1840.

How grateful I am to you for your letter, Alexyéi Petróvitch! How much good it has done me! I see that you really are a good and trustworthy man, and therefore I shall not dissimulate before you. I trust you. I know that you will not make a bad use of my frankness and that you will give me friendly advice. That is the point.

You noticed at the end of my letter a phrase which did not entirely please you. This is what it referred to. There is a neighbour here . . . . he was not here in your day, and you have not seen him. He . . . I might marry him, if I wished; he is a man who is still young, cultured, wealthy. There are no obstacles on the side of my relatives; on the contrary, they—I know this for certain—desire this marriage; he is a fine man, and I think he loves me. . . . But he is so languid and petty, all his desires are so narrow, that I cannot help recognising my superiority over him; he feels this, and seems to take delight in it, and precisely that repels me from him; I cannot respect him, although he has an excellent

heart. What am I to do, tell me? Think for me and write me your opinion sincerely.

But how grateful I am to you for your letter! . . . Do you know, I have sometimes been visited by such bitter thoughts. . . . Do you know, I have gone so far as almost to feel ashamed of every—I will not say exalted—but of every trustful feeling. I have shut my book in vexation when it spoke of hope and happiness; I have turned away from the cloudless sky, from the fresh verdure of the trees, from everything that smiled and was glad. What a painful condition this was! I say "was" . . . as though it had passed!

I do not know whether it has passed; I know that if it does not return I shall be indebted to you for it. You see, Alexyéi Petróvitch, how much good you have done, perhaps without yourself suspecting it! Now, in the very heart of summer, the days are magnificent, the sky is blue, bright. . . . It cannot be more beautiful in Italy. But you are sitting in a stifling and dusty town, you are walking on the scorching pavements. What possesses you to do it? You ought, at least, to remove to a villa somewhere. They say that beyond Peterhoff, on the seashore, there are charming places.

I should like to write more to you, but it is impossible: such a sweet perfume has been wafted up to me from the garden that I cannot remain

in the house. I shall put on my hat and go for a stroll. . . . Farewell until another time, kind Alexyéi Petróvitch.

Yours truly,
M. B.

P.S. I have forgotten to tell you . . . . just imagine: that wit, of whom I recently wrote you, —just imagine: he has made me a declaration of love, and in the most fiery terms! At first I thought that he was making fun of me; but he wound up with a formal proposal. What do you think of that, after all his calumnies? But he is positively too old. Last night, to pique him, I sat down at the piano in front of the open window in the moonlight, and played Beethoven. It was so delightful to me to feel its cold light on my face, so consolatory to send forth upon the perfumed night air the noble sounds of music, athwart which, at times, the song of the nightingale was audible! It is a long time since I have been so happy, but do you write to me concerning the thing I asked you about in the beginning of my letter: it is very important.

## XII

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna*

St. Petersburg, July 8, 1840.

My dear Márya Alexándrovna, here is my opinion in two words: throw both the old bachelor and the young suitor overboard! There 's no use in deliberating over this. Neither of them is worthy of you—that is as clear as that twice two are four. The young neighbour may be a good man, but I throw him over! I am convinced that you and he have nothing in common, and you can imagine how cheerful it would be to live together! And why be in a hurry? Is it possible that a woman like you—I have no intention of paying compliments, and therefore will not enlarge further—that such a woman as you should not meet some one who will know how to appreciate her? No, Márya Alexándrovna; heed me if you really think that my advice is beneficial.

But confess that you found it pleasant to behold that old calumniator at your feet! . . . If I had been in your place, I would have made him sing Beethoven's "Adelaïda" the whole night through, staring at the moon the while.

But God be with them, with your admirers! It is not of them that I wish to talk with you to-day.

I am in a sort of half-irritated, half-agitated condition to-day, as the result of a letter which I received yesterday. I send you a copy of it. This letter was written by one of my very old friends and comrades in the service, a kind-hearted but rather narrow-minded man. A couple of years ago he went abroad, and up to the present he has not written to me a single time. Here is his letter. N.B. He is very far from bad-looking.

"*Cher Alexis:*

"I am in Naples. I am sitting in my chamber on the Chiaja at the window. The weather is wonderful. At first I gazed a long time at the sea, then impatience seized upon me, and the brilliant idea of writing a letter to thee occurred to me. I have always felt an affection for thee, my dear friend,—Heaven is my witness that I have! And now I should like to pour myself into thy bosom . . . I believe that is the way it is expressed in our elevated language. And the reason I have been seized with impatience is that I am expecting a woman; together we shall go to Baiæ to eat oysters and oranges, to watch the dark-brown shepherds in red nightcaps dance the tarantella, to broil ourselves in the sunshine, to watch the lizards—in a word, to enjoy life to the full. My dear friend, I am so happy that I am unable to express it to you. If I possessed thy power with the pen, oh, what a picture I would

draw before thine eyes! But, unfortunately, as thou knowest, I am an illiterate man. The woman for whom I am waiting, and who has already made me constantly start and glance at the door, loves me—and as for the way I love her, it seems to me that even thou with thy eloquent pen couldst not describe that.

"I must tell thee that I have known her for the last three months, and ever since the very first day of our acquaintance, my love has gone on *crescendo,* in the shape of a chromatic scale, ever higher and higher, and at the present moment it has already attained to the seventh heaven. I am jesting, but, as a matter of fact, my attachment to that woman is something extraordinary, supernatural. Just imagine: I hardly ever talk with her, but I stare at her incessantly and laugh. I sit at her feet, I feel that I am frightfully stupid and happy, simply unlawfully happy. It sometimes happens that she lays her hand on my head. . . . And then, I must tell thee, . . . but thou canst not understand it; for thou art a philosopher, and have been a philosopher all thy life. Her name is Nina, Ninetta—as thou wilt; she is the daughter of a wealthy merchant here. Beautiful as all thy Raphaels; lively as powder, blithe, so clever that it is positively amazing that she should have fallen in love with such a fool as myself; she sings like a bird, and her eyes—

" Forgive me, pray, for this involuntary tirade. . . . I thought the door creaked. . . . No, the rogue has not come yet! Thou wilt ask me how all this is going to end, and what I mean to do with myself, and whether I shall remain here long. I know nothing, and wish to know nothing, about that, my dear fellow. What is to be will be. . . . For if one is to pause and reason constantly . . . . .

" 'T is she! . . . . She is running up the stairs and singing. . . She has come. . . Well, good-by, my dear fellow. . . . I 'm in no mood for thee. Pardon me—it is she who has spattered this letter all over: she struck the paper with her damp nosegay. At first she thought I was writing to a woman; but as soon as she found out that it was to a man-friend, she bade me give you her compliments, and inquire whether there are any flowers in your country, and whether they are fragrant. Well, good-by. . . . If you could only hear how she laughs! . . . Silver rings just like that: and what goodness in every sound!—One fairly wants to kiss her feet. Let us go, let us go! Be not angry at this untidy scrawl, and envy thy—

M . . ."

The letter actually was bespattered, and exhaled an odour of orange-flowers . . . two white petals had adhered to the paper. This letter has

excited me. . . . I have called to mind my sojourn in Naples. . . . The weather was magnificent then also; May was only just beginning; I had recently completed my twenty-second year; but I did not know any Ninetta. I roamed about alone, consumed with a thirst for bliss, which was both painful and sweet,—sweet to the point where it itself bore a sort of resemblance to bliss. . . . What a thing it is to be young! . . . I remember I once went out for a row on the bay at night. There were two of us: the boatman and I . . . . but what was it you thought? What a night it was, and what a sky, what stars—how they trembled and crumbled in the waves! With what a liquid flame did the water flow over and flash up under the oars, what perfume was wafted all over the sea—it is not for me to describe, however " eloquent " my pen may be. A French ship of the line lay at anchor in the roadstead. It glowed obscurely red all over with lights; long streaks of red light, the reflection of the illuminated windows, stretched across the dark sea. Merry music reached me in occasional bursts; I recall, in particular, the trill of a small flute amid the dull blaring of the horns; it seemed to flutter like a butterfly around my boat. I ordered the man to row to the ship; twice did we make the circuit of it. Women's forms flitted past the windows, borne smartly past on the whirlwind of the waltz. . . . I ordered the boatman to put off,

far away, straight out into the darkness. . . I remember that the sounds pursued me long and importunately. . . . At last they died away. I stood up in the boat and stretched out my arms over the sea in the dumb pain of longing. . . . Oh, how my heart ached then! How oppressive was my loneliness! With what joy would I have given myself at that moment wholly, wholly . . . . wholly, if only there had been any one to whom to give myself! With what a bitter feeling in my soul did I fling myself, face down, in the bottom of the boat and, like Repetíloff, request him to take me somewhere or other!

But my friend here experienced nothing of that sort. And why should he? He has managed matters much more cleverly than I did. He is living . . . . while I . . . . not without cause has he called me a philosopher. . . . . 'T is strange! You, also, are called a philosopher. . . . Why should such a calamity overtake us? . . . .

I am not living. . . . But who is to blame for that? Why do I sit here in Petersburg? What am I doing here? Why do I kill day after day? Why don't I go to the country? Are not our steppes beautiful? Or cannot one breathe freely in them? Or is it stifling in them? What possesses me to pursue dreams, when, perchance, happiness is within my reach? It is settled: I am going away, I am going away to-morrow, if possible; I am going home, that is, to you—it is all

the same: for we live only twenty versts apart. What 's the use, after all, in languishing here? And why is it that this idea did not occur to me earlier? My dear Márya Alexándrovna, we shall soon meet. But it is remarkable that this thought did not enter my head until this moment! I ought to have gone away long, long ago. Farewell until we meet, Márya Alexándrovna.

July 9th.

I have deliberately given myself twenty-four hours to think it over, and now I am definitively convinced that there is no reason why I should remain here. The dust in the streets is so biting that it makes one's eyes ache. To-day I shall begin to pack; on the day after to-morrow, probably, I shall leave here; and ten days hence I shall have the pleasure of seeing you. I hope you will receive me as of old. By the way—your sister is still visiting your aunt, is she not?

Permit me, Márya Alexándrovna, to press your hand warmly, and to say to you from my soul: farewell until a speedy meeting. I was preparing to leave in any case, but this letter has precipitated my intention. Let us assume that this letter proves nothing; let us even assume that Ninetta would not please any one else—me, for example. Yet I am going, all the same; there is no doubt about that. Farewell for the present.

Yours, A. S.

## XIII

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch*

VILLAGE OF . . . NO, July 16, 1840.

You are coming hither, you will soon be with us, will you not, Alexyéi Petróvitch? I will not conceal from you that this news both delights and agitates me. . . . How shall we meet? Will that spiritual bond be preserved which, so it seems to me, has already begun to unite us? Will it not break when we meet? I do not know; I am apprehensive, for some reason or other. I will not answer your last letter, although I might say a good deal; I will defer all this until we meet. My mother is greatly delighted at your coming. . . . She has been aware that I was corresponding with you. The weather is enchanting. We will walk a great deal; I will show you the new places which I have discovered . . . . one long, narrow valley is particularly nice: it lies between hillocks, covered with forest. . . . It seems to be hiding in their curves. A tiny brook flows along it and can barely force its way through the grass and flowers. . . . You shall see. Come: perhaps you will not find it tedious.

M. B.

P.S. You will not see my sister, I think: she is still visiting my aunt. I believe (this is between ourselves) that she is going to marry a very amiable young man—an officer. Why did you send me that letter from Naples? The life here perforce seems dim and pale in comparison with that luxury and that brilliancy. But Mademoiselle Ninetta is wrong: flowers grow and are fragrant—even with us.

## XIV

*From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch*

VILLAGE OF . . . NO, January, 1841.

I have written to you several times, Alexyéi Petróvitch. . . . You have not answered me. Are you alive? Or perhaps our correspondence has begun to bore you; perhaps you have found for yourself a more agreeable diversion than the letters of a rustic young lady can afford you? Evidently you called me to mind for the lack of something to do. If that is the case, I wish you happiness. If you do not answer me this time, I shall not trouble you again; there will be nothing left for me to do but to regret my imprudence, that I have unnecessarily permitted myself to be roused up, have offered my hand and emerged, if only for a moment, from my isolated

nook. I ought to remain in it forever, lock myself in—that is my portion, the portion of all old maids. I ought to accustom myself to that thought. There is no necessity for coming out into God's sunlight, no necessity for craving fresh air, when the lungs will not bear it. By the way, we are now blocked up with dead drifts of snow. I shall be more sensible henceforth. . . . People do not die of boredom, but it is possible to perish with melancholy, I suppose. If I am mistaken, prove it to me. But I think I am not mistaken. In any case, farewell. I wish you happiness. M. B.

## XV

*From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna*

Dresden, September, 1842.

I write to you, my dear Márya Alexándrovna, and I write only because I do not wish to die without having taken leave of you, and without having recalled myself to your mind. I am condemned by the doctors . . . . and I myself feel that my life is drawing to a close. On my table stands a rose; before it fades I shall be no more. But that comparison is not quite just. The rose is far more interesting than I am.

As you see, I am abroad. I have been in Dresden six months. I received your last letters—I am ashamed to confess: I lost several of them more than a year ago, and did not answer you. . . I will tell you presently why. But, evidently, you have always been dear to me: with the exception of yourself, there is no one of whom I wish to take leave, and perhaps I have no one to whom I could bid farewell.

Soon after my last letter to you (I was quite ready to set out for your parts, and was making various plans in advance), there happened to me an episode which had, I may say, a strong influence on my fate,—so strong that here I am, dying, thanks to that event. To wit: I set out for the theatre, to see the ballet. I have never liked the ballet, and have always felt a secret disgust for all sorts of actresses, singers, and dancers. . . . But, obviously, one cannot change his fate, neither does any one know himself, and it is also impossible to foresee the future. In point of fact, nothing happens in life except the unexpected, and we do nothing all our life long but adjust ourselves to events. . . . But I believe I am dropping into philosophy again. Old habit! . . . In a word, I fell in love with a dancer.

This was all the more strange because she could not be called a beauty. She had, it is true, wonderful golden hair, with an ash tinge, and large, bright eyes, with a pensive and, at the same

time, a bold glance. . . . Have n't I cause to know the expression of that glance? I pined and languished for a whole year in its rays! She had a splendid figure, and when she danced her folk-dance, the spectators used to stamp and shout with rapture. . . . But I do not think any one besides myself fell in love with her—at all events, no one fell in love with her as I did. From the very minute that I beheld her for the first time—(will you believe it? all I have to do even now is to shut my eyes, and immediately here stands before me the theatre, the almost empty stage, representing the interior of a forest, and she runs out from behind the side-scenes on the right, with a wreath of vine-leaves on her head and a tiger-skin over her shoulders)—from that fatal minute I belonged to her wholly,—just as a dog belongs to his master; and if now, when I am dying, I do not belong to her, it is merely because she has cast me off.

To tell the truth, she never troubled herself especially about me. She barely noticed me, although she good-naturedly made use of my money. I was for her, as she expressed it in her broken French jargon, "*oun Rousso buon enfan,*"—and nothing more. But I . . . . I could no longer live anywhere where she was not; I tore myself at one wrench from all that was dear to me, from my native land itself, and set out in pursuit of that woman.

Perhaps you think that she was clever?—Not in the least! It sufficed to cast a glance at her low brow, it sufficed to note, if only once, her lazy, heedless smile, in order instantly to convince one's self as to the paucity of her mental abilities. And I never imagined her to be a remarkable woman. On the whole, I did not deceive myself for a single minute on her score. But that did not help matters in the least. Whatever I thought of her in her absence, in her presence I felt nothing but servile adoration. . . . In the German fairy-tales the knights often fall into that sort of stupor. I could not tear my eyes from her features; I could not hear enough of her remarks, or sufficiently watch every movement of hers; to tell the truth, I actually breathed to her breathing. However, she was good-natured, unconstrained—too unconstrained even; she did not put on airs, as the majority of artists do. She had a great deal of life, that is, a great deal of blood, of that splendid Southern blood, into which the sun of their land must have dropped a portion of his rays. She slept nine hours a day, was fond of good eating, never read a single line of print, unless, perhaps, the articles in the newspapers in which she was mentioned, and almost the sole tender sentiment in her life was her attachment to il signore Carlino, a small and greedy Italian who served as her secretary and whom she afterward married. And with such a woman as this I,

who have tasted so many varied intellectual subtleties, I, already an old man, could fall in love! Who could have expected it? I never expected it, at all events. I did not anticipate the part which I should be compelled to play. I did not expect that I should haunt rehearsals, freeze and get bored behind the scenes, inhale the reek of the theatre, make acquaintance with various unseemly individuals . . . . what am I saying?—make acquaintance—bow to them. I had not expected that I should carry a dancer's shawl, buy new gloves for her, clean her old ones with white bread (but I did it, I take my oath!), cart home her bouquets, run about to the anterooms of journalists and directors, wear myself out, give serenades, catch cold, lose my strength. . . . I had not expected that I should acquire at last in a certain little German town the ingenious nickname of "*der Kunst-barbar.*" . . . And all this in vain—in the fullest sense of the word, in vain! There, that is precisely the state of the case. . . .

Do you remember how you and I, orally and by letter, argued about love, into what subtleties we entered? And when it is put to the proof, it turns out that real love is a feeling not at all resembling that which we imagined it to be. Love is not even a feeling at all; it is a malady, a well-known condition of the soul and body. It does not develop gradually; there is no possibility of

doubting it; one cannot dodge it, although it does not always manifest itself in identically the same fashion. It generally takes possession of a man without being invited, suddenly, against his will —precisely like the cholera or a fever. . . . It lays hold upon him, the dear creature, as a hawk does upon a chicken; and it will bear him off whithersoever it wishes, struggle and resist as he may. . . . In love there is no equality, no so-called free union of souls and other ideal things, invented at their leisure by German professors. . . . No; in love one person is the slave, the other is the sovereign, and not without cause do the poets prate of the chains imposed by love. Yes, love is a chain, and the heaviest of chains at that. At all events, I have arrived at that conviction, and have reached it by the path of experience. I have purchased that conviction at the price of my life, because I am dying a slave.

Alack, what a fate is mine! one thinks. In my youth I was resolutely determined to conquer heaven for myself. . . . Later on, I fell to dreaming about the welfare of all mankind, the prosperity of my fatherland. Then that passed off: I thought only of how I might arrange my domestic, my family life . . . . and I tripped over an ant-hill—and flop! I went headlong on the ground, and into the grave. . . . What master hands we Russians are at winding up in that fashion!

However, it is high time for me to turn away from all this,—it was time long ago! May this burden fall from my soul along with my life! I wish for the last time, if only for a moment, to enjoy that good, gentle feeling which is diffused within me like a tranquil light as soon as I call you to mind. Your image is now doubly dear to me. . . . Along with it there surges up before me the image of my native land, and I waft to it and to you my last greeting. Live on, live long and happily, and remember one thing: whether you remain in that remote nook of the steppes, where you sometimes find things so painful, but where I should so like to spend my last day, or whether you shall enter upon another career, remember: life fails to disappoint him alone who does not meditate upon it, and, demanding nothing from it, calmly accepts its sparse gifts, and calmly makes use of them. Go forward, while you can: but when your feet fail you,—sit down near the road, and gaze at the passers-by without vexation and without envy: for they will not go far! I have said this to you before, but death will teach any man whomsoever; moreover, who shall say what is life, what is truth? Remember *who* it was that gave no answer to this question. . . . Farewell, Márya Alexándrovna; farewell for the last time, and bear no ill will to poor—

ALEXYÉI.

# THE REGION OF DEAD CALM

(1854)

# THE REGION OF DEAD CALM

## I

IN a fairly-large recently-whitewashed chamber of a wing of the manor-house in the village of Sásovo, *** county, T*** Government, a young man in a paletot was sitting at a small, warped table, looking over accounts. Two stearine candles, in silver travelling-candlesticks, were burning in front of him; in one corner, on the wall-bench, stood an open bottle-case, in another a servant was setting up an iron bed. On the other side of a low partition a samovár was murmuring and hissing; a dog was nestling about on some hay which had just been brought in. In the doorway stood a peasant-man in a new overcoat girt with a red belt, with a large beard, and an intelligent face—the overseer, judging by all the tokens. He was gazing attentively at the seated young man.

Against one wall stood a very aged, tiny piano; beside it an equally-ancient chest of drawers with holes in place of the locks; between the windows a small, dim mirror was visible; on the partition-wall hung an old portrait, which

was almost completely peeled off, representing a woman with powdered hair, in a *robe ronde,* and with a black ribbon about her slender neck. Judging from the very perceptible sagging of the ceiling, and the slope of the floor, which was full of cracks, the little wing into which we have conducted the reader had existed for a very long time. No one lived in it permanently; it was put to use when the owners came. The young man who was sitting at the table was the owner of the village of Sásovo. He had arrived only on the previous day from his principal estate, situated a hundred versts [1] distant, and was preparing to depart on the morrow, after completing the inspection of the farming, listening to the demands of the peasants, and verifying all the documents.

"Well, that will do,"—he said, raising his head;—"I am tired. Thou mayest go now,"—he added, turning to the overseer;—"and come very early to-morrow morning, and notify the peasants at daybreak that they are to present themselves in assembly,—dost hear me?"

"I obey."

"And order the estate-clerk to present to me the report for the last month. But thou hast done well,"—the gentleman went on, casting a glance around him,—"in whitewashing the walls. Everything seems cleaner."

[1] A verst is two thirds of a mile.—Translator.

The overseer silently swept a glance around the walls also.

"Well, go now."

The overseer made his obeisance and left the room.

The gentleman stretched himself.

"Hey!"—he shouted.—"Give me some tea! . . . . 'T is time to go to bed."

His servant went to the other side of the partition, and speedily returned with a glass of tea, a bundle of town cracknels, and a cream-jug on an iron tray. The gentleman began to drink tea, but before he had had time to swallow two mouthfuls, the noise of persons entering resounded from an adjoining room, and some one's squeaking voice inquired:

"Is Vladímir Sergyéitch Astákhoff at home? Can he be seen?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch (that was the name of the young man in the paletot) cast a glance of surprise at his man, and said in a hurried whisper:

"Go, find out who it is."

The man withdrew, slamming behind him the door, which closed badly.

"Announce to Vladímir Sergyéitch,"—rang out the same squeaking voice as before,—"that his neighbour Ipátoff wishes to see him, if it will not incommode him; and another neighbour has come with me, Bodryakóff, Iván Ílitch, who also desires to pay his respects."

Vladímir Sergyéitch made an involuntary gesture of vexation. Nevertheless, when his man entered the room, he said to him:

"Ask them in." And he arose to receive his visitors.

The door opened, and the visitors made their appearance. One of them, a robust, grey-haired little old man, with a small, round head and bright little eyes, walked in advance; the other, a tall, thin man of three-and-thirty, with a long, swarthy face and dishevelled hair, walked behind, with a shambling gait. The old man wore a neat grey coat with large, mother-of-pearl buttons; a small, pink neckerchief, half concealed by the rolling collar of his white shirt, loosely encircled his neck; his feet shone resplendent in gaiters; the plaids of his Scotch trousers were agreeably gay in hue; and, altogether, he produced a pleasant impression. His companion, on the contrary, evoked in the spectator a less favourable sensation: he wore an old black dress-coat, buttoned up to the throat; his full trousers, of thick, winter tricot, matched his coat in colour; no linen was visible, either around his throat or around his wrists. The little old man was the first to approach Vladímir Sergyéitch, and, with an amiable inclination of the head, he began in the same shrill little voice:

"I have the honour to introduce myself,—your nearest neighbour, and even a relative,

Ipátoff, Mikhaílo Nikoláitch. I have long wished to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance. I hope that I have not disturbed you."

Vladímir Sergyéitch replied that he was very glad to see him, and that he was not disturbed in the least, and would not he take a seat . . . . and drink tea.

"And this nobleman,"—went on the little old man, after listening with a courteous smile to Vladímir Sergyéitch's unfinished phrases, and extending his hand in the direction of the gentleman in the dress-coat,—"also your neighbour . . . . and my good acquaintance, Iván Ílitch, strongly desired to make your acquaintance."

The gentleman in the dress-coat, from whose countenance no one would have suspected that he was capable of desiring anything strongly in his life—so preoccupied and, at the same time, so sleepy was the expression of that countenance,—the gentleman in the dress-coat bowed clumsily and languidly. Vladímir Sergyéitch bowed to him in return, and again invited the visitors to be seated.

The visitors sat down.

"I am very glad,"—began the little old man, pleasantly throwing apart his hands, while his companion set to scrutinising the ceiling, with his mouth slightly open:—"I am very glad that I have, at last, the honour of seeing you personally. Although you have your permanent resi-

dence in a county which lies at a considerable distance from these localities, still, we regard you also as one of our own primordial landed proprietors, so to speak."

"That is very flattering to me,"—returned Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Flattering or not, it is a fact. You must excuse us, Vladímir Sergyéitch; we people here in *** county are a straightforward folk; we live in our simplicity; we say what we think, without circumlocution. It is our custom, I must tell you, not to call upon each other on Name-days[1] otherwise than in our frock-coats. Truly! We have made that the rule. On that account, we are called 'frock-coaters' in the adjoining counties, and we are even reproached for our bad style; but we pay no attention to that! Pray, what is the use of living in the country—and then standing on ceremony?"

"Of course, what can be better . . . . in the country . . . . than that naturalness of intercourse,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"And yet,"—replied the little old man,—"among us in our county dwell people of the cleverest sort,—one may say people of European culture, although they do not wear dress-suits.

[1] The Name-day—that is, the day of the saint after whom a person is named—is observed with feasting and congratulation, instead of the birthday. For ceremonious calls, no matter at what hour of the day, a man who has no official uniform must wear his evening suit, on penalty of being considered ignorant or rude, or (in official circles) of being refused admittanc.—TRANSLATOR.

Take, for example, our historian Evsiukóff, Stepán Stepánitch: he is interesting himself in Russian history from the most ancient times, and is known in Petersburg—an extremely learned man! There is in our town an ancient Swedish cannon-ball . . . . 't is placed yonder, in the centre of the public square . . . and 't was he who discovered it, you know! Certainly! Tzénteler, Antón Kárlitch . . . . now he has studied natural history; but they say all Germans are successful in that line. When, ten years ago, a stray hyena was killed in our vicinity, it was this Antón Kárlitch who discovered that it really was a hyena, by cause of the peculiar construction of its tail. And then, we have a landed proprietor Kaburdín: he chiefly writes light articles; he wields a very dashing pen; his articles appear in 'Galatea.' Bodryakóff, . . . . not Iván Ílitch; no, Iván Ílitch neglects that; but another Bodryakóff, Sergyéi . . . . what the deuce was his father's baptismal name, Iván Ílitch . . . . what the deuce was it?"

"Sergyéitch,"—prompted Iván Ílitch.

"Yes; Sergyéi Sergyéitch,—he busies himself with writing verses. Well, of course he 's not a Púshkin, but sometimes he gets off things which would pass muster even in the capitals. Do you know his epigram on Agéi Fómitch?"

"What Agéi Fómitch?"

"Akh, pardon me; I keep forgetting that you

are not a resident here, after all. He is our chief of police. The epigram is extremely amusing. Thou rememberest it, I believe, Iván Ílitch?"

"Agéi Fómitch,"—said Bodryakóff, indifferently—

> ". . . . not without cause is gloriously
> By the nobles' election honoured . . . . ."

"I must tell you,"—broke in Ipátoff,—"that he was elected almost exclusively by white balls, for he is a most worthy man."

"Agéi Fómitch,"—repeated Bodryakóff,

> ". . . . not without cause is gloriously
> By the nobles' election honoured:
> He drinks and eats regularly . . . .
> So why should not he be the regulator of order?"[1]

The little old man burst out laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha! that is n't bad, is it? Ever since then, if you 'll believe me, each one of us will say, for instance, to Agéi Fómitch:' Good morning!'—and will invariably add: 'so why should not he be the regulator of order?' And does Agéi Fómitch get angry, think you? Not in the least. No—that 's not our way. Just ask Iván Ilitch here if it is."

Iván Ilitch merely rolled up his eyes.

"Get angry at a jest—how is that possible?

[1] A pun is intended: *isprávno*, regularly, in orderly manner; *ispravnik*, the chief of police in a rural district.—TRANSLATOR.

Now, take Iván Ílitch there; his nickname among us is 'The Folding Soul,' because he agrees to everything very promptly. What then? Does Iván Ílitch take offence at that? Never!"

Iván Ílitch, slowly blinking his eyes, looked first at the little old man, then at Vladímir Sergyéitch.

The epithet, "The Folding Soul," really did fit Iván Ílitch admirably. There was not a trace in him of what is called will or character. Any one who wished could lead him whithersoever he would; all that was necessary was to say to him: "Come on, Iván Ílitch!"—and he picked up his cap and went; but if another person turned up, and said to him: "Halt, Iván Ílitch!"—he laid down his cap and remained. He was of a peaceable, tranquil disposition, had lived a bachelor-life, did not play cards, but was fond of sitting beside the players and looking into each of their faces in turn. Without society he could not exist, and solitude he could not endure. At such times he became despondent; however, this happened very rarely with him. He had another peculiarity: rising from his bed betimes in the morning, he would sing in an undertone an old romance:

> "In the country once a Baron
> Dwelt in simplicity rural. . . ."

In consequence of this peculiarity of Iván Ílitch's, he was also called "The Hawfinch," be-

cause, as is well known, the hawfinch when in captivity sings only once in the course of the day, early in the morning. Such was Iván Ilitch Bodryakóff.

The conversation between Ípátoff and Vladímir Sergyéitch lasted for quite a long time, but not in its original, so to speak, speculative direction. The little old man questioned Vladímir Sergyéitch about his estate, the condition of his forests and other sorts of land, the improvements which he had already introduced or was only intending to introduce in his farming; he imparted to him several of his own observations; advised him, among other things, in order to get rid of hummocky pastures, to sprinkle them with oats, which, he said, would induce the pigs to plough them up with their snouts, and so forth. But, at last, perceiving that Vladímir Sergyéitch was so sleepy that he could hardly keep his eyes open, and that a certain deliberation and incoherence were making themselves evident in his speech, the little old man rose, and, with a courteous obeisance, declared that he would not incommode him any longer with his presence, but that he hoped to have the pleasure of seeing the valued guest at his own house not later than the following day, at dinner.

"And the first person you meet, not to mention any small child, but, so to speak, any hen or peasant-woman,"—he added,—"will point

out to you the road to my village. All you have to do is to ask for Ipátoff. The horses will trot there of themselves."

Vladímir Sergyéitch replied with a little hesitation—which, however, was natural to him—that he would try . . . that if nothing prevented . . . .

"Yes, we shall certainly expect you,"—the little old man interrupted him, cordially, shook his hand warmly, and briskly withdrew, exclaiming in the doorway, as he half turned round:—"Without ceremony!"

"Folding Soul" Bodryakóff bowed in silence and vanished in the wake of his companion, with a preliminary stumble on the threshold.

Having seen his unexpected guests off, Vladímir Sergyéitch immediately undressed, got into bed, and went to sleep.

Vladímir Sergyéitch Astákhoff belonged to the category of people who, after having cautiously tested their powers in two or three different careers, are wont to say of themselves that they have finally come to the conclusion to look at life from a practical point of view, and who devote their leisure to augmenting their revenues. He was not stupid, was rather penurious, and very sensible; was fond of reading, of society, of music—but all in moderation . . . . and bore himself very decorously. He was twenty-seven years old. A great many young

men of his sort have sprung up recently. He was of medium height, well built, and had agreeable though small features; their expression almost never varied; his eyes always gleamed with one and the same stern, bright glance; only now and then did this glance soften with a faint shade of something which was not precisely sadness, nor yet precisely boredom; a courteous smile rarely quitted his lips. He had very handsome, fair hair, silky, and falling in long ringlets. Vladímir Sergyéitch owned about six hundred souls[1] on a good estate, and he was thinking of marriage—a marriage of inclination, but which should, at the same time, be advantageous. He was particularly desirous of finding a wife with powerful connections. In a word, he merited the appellation of "gentleman" which had recently come into vogue.

When he rose on the following morning, very early, according to his wont, our gentleman occupied himself with business, and, we must do him the justice to say, did so in a decidedly practical manner, which cannot always be said of practical young men among us in Russia. He patiently listened to the confused petitions and complaints of the peasants, gave them satisfaction so far as he was able, investigated the quarrels and dissensions which had arisen between

[1] Male serfs. The women and children did not figure on the revision lists.—TRANSLATOR.

relatives, exhorted some, scolded others, audited the clerk's accounts, brought to light two or three rascalities on the part of the overseer—in a word, handled matters in such wise that he was very well satisfied with himself, and the peasants, as they returned from the assembly to their homes, spoke well of him.

In spite of his promise given on the preceding evening to Ipátoff, Vladímir Sergyéitch had made up his mind to dine at home, and had even ordered his travelling-cook to prepare his favourite rice-soup with pluck; but all of a sudden, possibly in consequence of that feeling of satisfaction which had filled his soul ever since the early morning, he stopped short in the middle of the room, smote himself on the brow with his hand, and, not without some spirit, exclaimed aloud: "I believe I 'll go to that flowery old babbler!" No sooner said than done; half an hour later he was sitting in his new tarantás, drawn by four stout peasant-horses, and driving to Ipátoff's house, which was reckoned to be not more than twenty-five versts distant by a capital road.

## II

Mikhaílo Nikoláevitch Ipátoff's manor consisted of two separate small mansions, built opposite each other on the two sides of a huge pond through which ran a river. A long dam,

planted with silver poplars, shut off the pond; almost on a level with it the red roof of a small hand-mill was visible. Built exactly alike, and painted with the same lilac hue, the tiny houses seemed to be exchanging glances across the broad, watery expanse, with the glittering panes of their small, clean windows. From the middle of each little house a circular terrace projected, and a sharp-peaked pediment rose aloft, supported by four white pillars set close together. The ancient park ran all the way round the pond; lindens stretched out in alleys, and stood in dense clumps; aged pine-trees, with pale yellow boles, dark oaks, magnificent maples here and there reared high in air their solitary crests; the dense verdure of the thickly-spreading lilacs and acacias advanced close up to the very sides of the two little houses, leaving revealed only their fronts, from which winding paths paved with brick ran down the slope. Motley-hued ducks, white and grey geese were swimming in separate flocks on the clear water of the pond; it never became covered with scum, thanks to abundant springs which welled into its " head " from the base of the steep, rocky ravine. The situation of the manor was good, pleasant, isolated, and beautiful.

In one of the two little houses dwelt Mikhaíl Nikoláevitch himself; in the other lived his mother, a decrepit old woman of seventy years. When he drove on to the dam, Vladímir Ser-

gyéitch did not know to which house to betake himself. He glanced about him: a small urchin of the house-serfs was fishing, as he stood barefooted on a half-rotten tree-stump. Vladímir Sergyéitch hailed him.

"But to whom are you going—to the old lady or to the young master?"—replied the urchin, without taking his eyes from his float.

"What lady?"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch. —"I want to find Mikhaílo Nikoláitch."

"Ah! the young master? Well, then, turn to the right."

And the lad gave his line a jerk, and drew from the motionless water a small, silvery carp. Vladímir Sergyéitch drove to the right.

Mikhaíl Nikoláitch was playing at draughts with The Folding Soul when the arrival of Vladímir Sergyéitch was announced to him. He was delighted, sprang from his arm-chair, ran out into the anteroom and there kissed the visitor three times.

"You find me with my invariable friend, Vladímir Sergyéitch,"—began the loquacious little old man:—"with Iván Ílitch, who, I will remark in passing, is completely enchanted with your affability." (Iván Ílitch darted a silent glance at the corner.) "He was so kind as to remain to play draughts with me, while all my household went for a stroll in the park; but I will send for them at once. . . ."

"But why disturb them?"—Vladímir Sergyéitch tried to expostulate. . . .

"Not the least inconvenience, I assure you. Hey, there, Vánka, run for the young ladies as fast as thou canst . . . tell them that a guest has favoured us with a visit. And how does this locality please you? It 's not bad, is it? Kaburdín has composed some verses about it. 'Ipátovka, refuge lovely'—that 's the way they begin,—and the rest of it is just as good, only I don't remember all of it. The park is large, that 's the trouble; beyond my means. And these two houses, which are so much alike, as you have, perhaps, deigned to observe, were erected by two brothers—my father Nikolái, and my uncle Sergyéi; they also laid out the park; they were exemplary friends . . . . Damon and . . . . there now! I 've forgotten the other man's name. . . ."

"Pythion,"—remarked Iván Ílitch.

"Not really? Well, never mind." (At home the old man talked in a much more unconventional manner than when he was paying calls.)—"You are, probably, not ignorant of the fact, Vladímir Sergyéitch, that I am a widower, that I have lost my wife; my elder children are in government educational institutions,[1] and I have with me only the youngest two, and my sister-in-law lives with me—my wife's sister; you will see

[1] Of different grades (civil and military), for the children of the nobility or gentry. They are not charities.—Translator.

her directly. But why don't I offer you some refreshment? Iván Ílitch, my dear fellow, see to a little luncheon . . . . what sort of vodka are you pleased to prefer?"

"I drink nothing until dinner."

"Goodness, how is that possible! However, as you please. The truest hospitality is to let the guest do as he likes. We are very simple-mannered folk here, you see. Here with us, if I may venture so to express myself, we live not so much in a lonely as in a dead-calm place, a remote nook—that 's what! But why don't you sit down?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch seated himself, without letting go of his hat.

"Permit me to relieve you,"—said Ipátoff, and delicately taking his hat from him, he carried it off to a corner, then returned, looked his visitor in the eye with a cordial smile, and, not knowing just what agreeable thing to say to him, inquired, in the most hearty manner,—whether he was fond of playing draughts.

"I play all games badly,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"And that 's a very fine thing in you,"—returned Ipátoff:—"but draughts is not a game, but rather a diversion—a way of passing leisure time; is n't that so, Iván Ílitch?"

Iván Ílitch cast an indifferent glance at Ipátoff, as though he were thinking to himself,

" The devil only knows whether it is a game or a diversion," but, after waiting a while, he said:

" Yes; draughts don't count."

" Chess is quite another matter, they say,"—pursued Ipátoff;—" 't is a very difficult game, I 'm told. But, in my opinion . . . . but yonder come my people!"—he interrupted himself, glancing through the half-open glass door, which gave upon the park.

Vladímir Sergyéitch rose, turned round, and beheld first two little girls, about ten years of age, in pink cotton frocks and broad-brimmed hats, who were running alertly up the steps of the terrace; not far behind them a tall, plump, well-built young girl of twenty, in a dark gown, made her appearance. They all entered the house, and the little girls courtesied sedately to the visitor.

" Here, sir, let me present you,"—said the host; —" my daughters, sir. This one here is named Kátya, and this one is Nástya, and this is my sister-in-law, Márya Pávlovna, whom I have already had the pleasure of mentioning to you. I beg that you will love and favour them."

Vladímir Sergyéitch made his bow to Márya Pávlovna; she replied to him with a barely perceptible inclination of the head.

Márya Pávlovna held in her hand a large, open knife; her thick, ruddy-blond hair was slightly dishevelled,—a small green leaf had got entangled in it, her braids had escaped from the

comb,—her dark-skinned face was flushed, and her red lips were parted; her gown looked crumpled. She was breathing fast; her eyes were sparkling; it was evident that she had been working in the garden. She immediately left the room; the little girls ran out after her.

"She 's going to rearrange her toilet a bit,"—remarked the old man, turning to Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"they can't get along without that, sir!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch grinned at him in response, and became somewhat pensive. Márya Pávlovna had made an impression on him. It was long since he had seen such a purely Russian beauty of the steppes. She speedily returned, sat down on the divan, and remained motionless. She had smoothed her hair, but had not changed her gown,—had not even put on cuffs. Her features expressed not precisely pride, but rather austerity, almost harshness; her brow was broad and low, her nose short and straight; a slow, lazy smile curled her lips from time to time; her straight eyebrows contracted scornfully. She kept her large, dark eyes almost constantly lowered. "I know," her repellent young face seemed to be saying; "I know that you are all looking at me; well, then, look; you bore me." But when she raised her eyes, there was something wild, beautiful, and stolid about them, which was suggestive of the eyes of a doe. She had a mag-

nificent figure. A classical poet would have compared her to Ceres or Juno.

"What have you been doing in the garden?"—Ipátoff asked her, being desirous of bringing her into the conversation.

"I have been cutting off dead branches, and digging up the flower-beds," she replied, in a voice which was rather low, but agreeable and resonant.

"And are you tired?"

"The children are; I am not."

"I know,"—interposed the old man, with a smile;—"thou art a regular Bobélina! And have you been to grandmamma's?"

"Yes; she is asleep."

"Are you fond of flowers?"—Vladímir Sergyéitch asked her.

"Yes."

"Why dost thou not put on thy hat when thou goest out of doors?"—Ipátoff remarked to her. —"Just see how red and sunburned thou art."

She silently passed her hand over her face. Her hands were not large, but rather broad, and decidedly red. She did not wear gloves.

"And are you fond of gardening?"—Vladímir Sergyéitch put another question to her.

"Yes."

Vladímir Sergyéitch began to narrate what a fine garden there was in his neighbourhood, belonging to a wealthy landed proprietor named

N***.—The head gardener, a German, received in wages alone two thousand rubles, silver[1]—he said, among other things.

"And what is the name of that gardener?"—inquired Iván Ílitch, suddenly.

"I don't remember,—Meyer or Müller, I think. But why do you ask?"

"For no reason in particular, sir,"—replied Iván Ílitch.—"To find out his name."

Vladímir Sergyéitch continued his narration. The little girls, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch's daughters, entered, sat down quietly, and quietly began to listen. . . .

A servant made his appearance at the door, had announced that Egór Kapítonitch had arrived.

"Ah! Ask him in, ask him in!"—exclaimed Ipátoff.

There entered a short, fat little old man, one of the sort of people who are called squat or dumpy, with a puffy and, at the same time, a wrinkled little face, after the fashion of a baked apple. He wore a grey hussar jacket with black braiding and a standing collar; his full coffee-coloured velveteen trousers ended far above his ankles.

"Good morning, my most respected Egór Kapítonitch,"—exclaimed Ipátoff, advancing to

[1] In those days there was a great difference in the value of silver and paper money: hence the kind is usually specified.—TRANSLATOR.

meet him.—" We have n't seen each other for a long time."

" Could n't be helped,"—returned Egór Kapítonitch in a lisping and whining voice, after having preliminarily exchanged salutations with all present;—" surely you know, Mikhaíl Sergyéitch, whether I am a free man or not? "

" And how are you not a free man, Egór Kapítonitch? "

" Why, of course I 'm not, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch; there 's my family, my affairs. . . . And there 's Matryóna Márkovna to boot," and he waved his hand in despair.

" But what about Matryóna Márkovna? "

And Ipátoff launched a slight wink at Vladímir Sergyéitch, as though desirous of exciting his interest in advance.

" Why, everybody knows,"—returned Egór Kapítonitch, as he took a seat;—" she 's always discontented with me, don't you know that? Whatever I say, it 's wrong, not delicate, not decorous. And why it is n't decorous, the Lord God alone knows. And the young ladies, my daughters that is to say, do the same, taking pattern by their mother. I don't say but what Matryóna Márkovna is a very fine woman, but she 's awfully severe on the score of manners."

" But, good gracious! in what way are your manners bad, Egór Kapítonitch? "

" That 's exactly what I 'd like to know myself;

but, evidently, she 's hard to suit. Yesterday, for instance, I said at table: ' Matryóna Márkovna,' " (and Egór Kapítonitch imparted to his voice an insinuating inflection,—" ' Matryóna Márkovna,' says I, ' what 's the meaning of this, —that Aldóshka is n't careful with the horses, does n't know how to drive? ' says I; ' there 's the black stallion quite foundered.'—I-iikh! how Matryóna Márkovna did flare up, and set to crying shame on me: ' Thou dost not know how to express thyself decently in the society of ladies,' says she; and the young ladies instantly galloped away from the table, and on the next day, the Biriúloff young ladies, my wife's nieces, had heard all about it. And how had I expressed myself badly? And no matter what I say—and sometimes I really am incautious,—no matter to whom I say it, especially at home,—those Biriúloff girls know all about it the next day. A fellow simply does n't know what to do. Sometimes I 'm just sitting so, thinking after my fashion, —I breathe hard, as perhaps you know,—and Matryóna Márkovna sets to berating me again: ' Don't snore,' says she; ' nobody snores nowadays! '—' What art thou scolding about, Matryóna Márkovna? ' says I. ' Good mercy, thou shouldst have compassion, but thou scoldest.' So I don't meditate at home any more. I sit and look down—so—all the time. By Heaven, I do. And then, again, not long ago, we got into

bed; 'Matryóna Márkovna,' says I, 'what makes thee spoil thy page-boy, mátushka?[1] Why, he 's a regular little pig,' says I, 'and he might wash his face of a Sunday, at least.' And what happened? It strikes me that I said it distantly, tenderly, but I did n't hit the mark even then; Matryóna Márkovna began to cry shame on me again: 'Thou dost not understand how to behave in the society of ladies,' says she; and the next day the Biriúloff girls knew all about it. What time have I to think of visits under such circumstances, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch?"

"I 'm amazed at what you tell me,"—replied Ipátoff;—"I did not expect that from Matryóna Márkovna. Apparently, she is . . . ."

"An extremely fine woman,"—put in Egór Kapítonitch;—"a model wife and mother, so to speak, only strict on the score of manners. She says that *ensemble* is necessary in everything, and that I have n't got it. I don't speak French, as you are aware, I only understand it. But what 's that *ensemble* that I have n't got?"

Ipátoff, who was not very strong in French himself, only shrugged his shoulders.

"And how are your children—your sons, that is to say?"—he asked Egór Kapítonitch after a brief pause.

Egór Kapítonitch darted an oblique glance at him.

[1] Literally, "dear little mother."—Translator.

"My sons are all right. I 'm satisfied with them. The girls have got out of hand, but I 'm satisfied with my sons. Lyólya discharges his service well; his superior officers approve of him; that Lyólya of mine is a clever fellow. Well, Míkhetz—he 's not like that; he has turned out some sort of a philanthropist."

"Why a philanthropist?"

"The Lord knows; he speaks to nobody, he shuns folks. Matryóna Márkovna mostly abashes him. 'Why dost thou take pattern by thy father?' she says to him. 'Do thou respect him, but copy thy mother as to manners.' He 'll get straightened out, he 'll turn out all right also."

Vladímir Sergyéitch asked Ipátoff to introduce him to Egór Kapítonitch. They entered into conversation. Márya Pávlovna did not take part in it; Iván Ílitch seated himself beside her, and said two words, in all, to her; the little girls came up to him, and began to narrate something to him in a whisper. . . . The housekeeper entered, a gaunt old woman, with her head bound up in a dark kerchief, and announced that dinner was ready. All wended their way to the dining-room.

The dinner lasted for quite a long time. Ipátoff kept a good cook, and ordered pretty good wines, not from Moscow, but from the capital of the government. Ipátoff lived at his ease, as

the saying goes. He did not own more than three hundred souls, but he was not in debt to any one, and had brought his estate into order. At table, the host himself did the greater part of the talking; Egór Kapítonitch chimed in, but did not forget himself, at the same time; he ate and drank gloriously. Márya Pávlovna preserved unbroken silence, only now and then replying with half-smiles to the hurried remarks of the two little girls, who sat one on each side of her. They were, evidently, very fond of her. Vladímir Sergyéitch made several attempts to enter into conversation with her, but without particular success. Folding Soul Bodryakóff even ate indolently and languidly. After dinner all went out on the terrace to drink coffee. The weather was magnificent; from the garden was wafted the sweet perfume of the lindens, which were then in full flower; the summer air, slightly cooled by the thick shade of the trees, and the humidity of the adjacent pond, breathed forth a sort of caressing warmth. Suddenly, from behind the poplars of the dam, the trampling of a horse's hoofs became audible, and a moment later, a horsewoman made her appearance in a long riding-habit and a grey hat, mounted on a bay horse; she was riding at a gallop; a page was galloping behind her, on a small, white cob.

"Ah!" — exclaimed Ipátoff, — "Nadézhda Alexyéevna is coming. What a pleasant surprise!"

"Alone?"—asked Márya Pávlovna, who up to that moment had been standing motionless in the doorway.

"Alone. . . . Evidently, something has detained Piótr Alexyéevitch."

Márya Pávlovna darted a sidelong glance from beneath her brows, a flush overspread her face, and she turned away.

In the meantime, the horsewoman had ridden through the wicket-gate into the garden, galloped up to the terrace, and sprang lightly to the ground, without waiting either for her groom or for Ipátoff, who had started to meet her. Briskly gathering up the train of her riding-habit, she ran up the steps, and springing upon the terrace, exclaimed blithely:

"Here I am!"

"Welcome!"—said Ipátoff.—"How unexpected, how charming this is! Allow me to kiss your hand. . . ."

"Certainly,"—returned the visitor; "only, you must pull off the glove yourself.—I cannot." And, extending her hand to him, she nodded to Márya Pávlovna.—"Just fancy, Másha, my brother will not be here to-day,"—she said, with a little sigh.

"I see for myself that he is not here,"—replied Márya Pávlovna in an undertone.

"He bade me say to thee that he is busy. Thou must not be angry. Good morning, Egór Kapítonitch; good morning, Iván Ílitch; good

morning, children. . . . Vásya,"—added the guest, turning to her small groom,—"order them to walk Little Beauty up and down well, dost hear? Másha, please give me a pin, to fasten up my train. . . . Come here, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch."

Ipátoff went closer to her.

"Who is that new person?"—she asked, quite loudly.

"That is a neighbour, Astákhoff, Vladímir Sergyéevitch, you know, the owner of Sásovo. I 'll introduce him if you like, shall I?"

"Very well . . . . afterward. Akh, what splendid weather!"—she went on.—"Egór Kapítonitch, tell me—can it be possible that Matryóna Márkovna growls even in such weather as this?"

"Matryóna Márkovna never grumbles in any sort of weather, madam; and she is merely strict on the score of manners. . ."

"And what are the Biriúloff girls doing? They know all about it the next day, don't they? . . . ." And she burst into a ringing, silvery laugh.

"You are pleased to laugh constantly,"—returned Egór Kapítonitch.—"However, when should a person laugh, if not at your age?"

"Egór Kapítonitch, don't get angry, my dear man! Akh, I 'm tired; allow me to sit down. . . ."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna dropped into an arm-

chair, and playfully pulled her hat down over her very eyes.

Ipátoff led Vladímir Sergyéitch up to her.

"Permit me, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, to present to you our neighbour, Mr. Astákhoff, of whom you have, probably, heard a great deal."

Vladímir Sergyéitch made his bow, while Nadézhda Alexyéevna looked up at him from under the brim of her round hat.

"Nadézhda Alexyéevna Véretyeff, our neighbour,"—went on Ipátoff, turning to Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"She lives here with her brother, Piótr Alexyéitch, a retired lieutenant of the Guards. She is a great friend of my sister-in-law, and bears good will to our household in general."

"A whole formal inventory,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna, laughing, and, as before, scanning Vladímir Sergyéitch from under her hat.

But, in the meantime, Vladímir Sergyéitch was thinking to himself: "Why, this is a very pretty woman also." And, in fact, Nadézhda Alexyéevna was a very charming young girl. Slender and graceful, she appeared much younger than she really was. She was already in her twenty-eighth year. She had a round face, a small head, fluffy fair hair, a sharp, almost audaciously upturned little nose, and merry, almost crafty little eyes. Mockery fairly glittered in them, and kindled in them in sparks. Her features, ex-

tremely vivacious and mobile, sometimes assumed an almost amusing expression; humour peered forth from them. Now and then, for the most part suddenly, a shade of pensiveness flitted across her face,—and at such times it became gentle and kindly; but she could not surrender herself long to meditation. She easily seized upon the ridiculous sides of people, and drew very respectable caricatures. Everybody had petted her ever since she was born, and that is something which is immediately perceptible; people who have been spoiled in childhood preserve a certain stamp to the end of their lives. Her brother loved her, although he asserted that she stung, not like a bee, but like a wasp; because a bee stings and then dies, whereas it signifies nothing for a wasp to sting. This comparison enraged her.

"Have you come here for long?"—she asked Vladímir Sergyéitch, dropping her eyes, and twisting her riding-whip in her hands.

"No; I intend to go away from here tomorrow."

"Whither?"

"Home."

"Home? Why, may I venture to ask?"

"What do you mean by 'why'? I have affairs at home which do not brook delay."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna looked at him.

"Are you such a . . . . punctual man?"

"I try to be a punctual man,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"In our sedate era, every honourable man *must* be sedate and punctual."

"That is perfectly just,"—remarked Ipátoff.—"Is n't that true Iván Ílitch?"

Iván Ílitch merely glanced at Ipátoff; but Egór Kapítonitch remarked:

"Yes, that 's so."

"'T is a pity,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna;—"precisely what we lack is a *jeune premier*. You know how to act comedy, I suppose?"

"I have never put my powers in that line to the test."

"I am convinced that you would act well. You have that sort of bearing . . . . a stately mien, which is indispensable in a *jeune premier*. My brother and I are preparing to set up a theatre here. However, we shall not act comedies only: we shall act all sorts of things—dramas, ballets, and even tragedies. Why would n't Másha do for Cleopatra or Phèdre? Just look at her!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch turned round. . . . Márya Pávlovna was gazing thoughtfully into the distance, as she stood leaning her head against the door, with folded arms. . . . At that moment, her regular features really did suggest the faces of ancient statues. She did not catch Nadézhda Alexyéevna's last words; but, perceiving that the glances of all present were suddenly directed

to her, she immediately divined what was going on, blushed, and was about to retreat into the drawing-room. . . . Nadézhda Alexyéevna briskly grasped her by the hand and, with the coquettish caressing action of a kitten, drew her toward her, and kissed that almost masculine hand. Márya Pávlovna flushed more vividly than before.

"Thou art always playing pranks, Nádya,"—she said.

"Did n't I speak the truth about thee? I am ready to appeal to all. . . . Well, enough, enough, I won't do it again. But I will say again,"—went on Nadézhda Alexyéevna, addressing Vladímir Sergyéitch,—"that it is a pity you are going away. We have a *jeune premier*, it is true; he calls himself so, but he is very bad."

"Who is he? permit me to inquire."

"Bodryakóff the poet. How can a poet be a *jeune premier?* In the first place, he dresses in the most frightful way; in the second place, he writes epigrams, and gets shy in the presence of every woman, even in mine. He lisps, one of his hands is always higher than his head, and I don't know what besides. Tell me, please, M'sieu Astákhoff, are all poets like that?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch drew himself up slightly.

"I have never known a single one of them, personally; but I must confess that I have never sought acquaintance with them."

"Yes, you certainly are a positive man. We shall have to take Bodryakóff; there 's nothing else to be done. Other *jeunes premiers* are even worse. That one, at all events, will learn his part by heart. Másha, in addition to tragic rôles, will fill the post of prima donna. . . . You have n't heard her sing, have you, M'sieu Astákhoff?"

"No,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch, displaying his teeth in a smile; "and I did not know...."

"What is the matter with thee to-day, Nádya?"—said Márya Pávlovna, with a look of displeasure.

Nadézhda Alexyéevna sprang to her feet.

"For Heaven's sake, Másha, do sing us something, please. . . . I won't let thee alone until thou singest us something, Másha dearest. I would sing myself, to entertain the visitors, but thou knowest what a bad voice I have. But, on the other hand, thou shalt see how splendidly I will accompany thee."

Márya Pávlovna made no reply.

"There 's no getting rid of thee,"—she said at last.—"Like a spoiled child, thou art accustomed to have all thy caprices humoured. I will sing, if you like."

"Bravo, bravo!"—exclaimed Nadézhda Alexyéevna, clapping her hands.—"Let us go into the drawing-room, gentlemen.—And as for caprices,"—she added, laughing,—"I 'll pay you off for that! Is it permissible to expose my weaknesses

in the presence of strangers? Egór Kapítonitch, does Matryóna Márkovna shame you *thus* before people?"

"Matryóna Márkovna,"—muttered Egór Kapítonitch,—"is a very worthy lady; only, on the score of manners . . . ."

"Well, come along, come along!"—Nadézhda Alexyéevna interrupted him, and entered the drawing-room.

All followed her. She tossed off her hat and seated herself at the piano. Márya Pávlovna stood near the wall, a good way from Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"Másha,"—said the latter, after reflecting a little,—"sing us 'The farm-hand is sowing the grain.'"[1]

Márya Pávlovna began to sing. Her voice was pure and powerful, and she sang well—simply, and without affectation. All listened to her with great attention, while Vladímir Sergyéitch could not conceal his amazement. When Márya Pávlovna had finished, he stepped up to her, and began to assure her that he had not in the least expected . . . .

"Wait, there 's something more coming!"—Nadézhda Alexyéevna interrupted him.—"Másha, I will soothe thy Topknot[2] soul:—Now sing us 'Humming, humming in the trees.'"

[1] A little Russian song.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] The popular nickname among Great Russians for the Little Russians.—TRANSLATOR.

"Are you a Little Russian?"—Vladímir Sergyéitch asked her.

"I am a native of Little Russia," she replied, and began to sing "Humming, humming."

At first she uttered the words in an indifferent manner; but the mournfully passionate lay of her fatherland gradually began to stir her, her cheeks flushed scarlet, her glance flashed, her voice rang out fervently. She finished.

"Good heavens! How well thou hast sung that!"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna, bending over the keys.—"What a pity that my brother was not here!"

Márya Pávlovna instantly dropped her eyes, and laughed with her customary bitter little laugh.

"You must give us something more,"—remarked Ipátoff.

"Yes, if you will be so good,"—added Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Excuse me, I will not sing any more to-day,"—said Márya Pávlovna, and left the room.

Nadézhda Alexyéevna gazed after her, first reflected, then smiled, began to pick out "The farm-hand is sowing the grain" with one finger, then suddenly began to play a brilliant polka, and without finishing it, struck a loud chord, clapped to the lid of the piano, and rose.

"'T is a pity that there is no one to dance

with!"—she exclaimed.—"It would be just the thing!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch approached her.

"What a magnificent voice Márya Pávlovna has,"—he remarked;—"and with how much feeling she sings!"

"And are you fond of music?"

"Yes . . . . very."

"Such a learned man, and you are fond of music!"

"But what makes you think that I am learned?"

"Akh, yes; excuse me, I am always forgetting that you are a positive man. But where has Márya Pávlovna gone? Wait, I 'll go after her."

And Nadézhda Alexyéevna fluttered out of the drawing-room.

"A giddy-pate, as you see,"—said Ipátoff, coming up to Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"but the kindest heart. And what an education she received you cannot imagine; she can express herself in all languages. Well, they are wealthy people, so that is comprehensible."

"Yes,"—articulated Vladímir Sergyéitch, abstractedly,—"she is a very charming girl. But permit me to inquire, Was your wife also a native of Little Russia?"

"Yes, she was, sir. My late wife was a Little Russian, as her sister Márya Pávlovna is. My wife, to tell the truth, did not even have a per-

fectly pure pronunciation; although she was a perfect mistress of the Russian language, still she did not express herself quite correctly; they pronounce *i, ui,* there, and their *kha* and *zhe* are peculiar also, you know; well, Márya Pávlovna left her native land in early childhood. But the Little Russian blood is still perceptible, is n't it?"

"Márya Pávlovna sings wonderfully,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Really, it is not bad. But why don't they bring us some tea? And where have the young ladies gone? 'T is time to drink tea."

The young ladies did not return very speedily. In the meantime, the samovár was brought, the table was laid for tea. Ipátoff sent for them. Both came in together. Márya Pávlovna seated herself at the table to pour the tea, while Nadézhda Alexyéevna walked to the door opening on the terrace, and began to gaze out into the garden. The brilliant summer day had been succeeded by a clear, calm evening; the sunset was flaming; the broad pond, half flooded with its crimson, stood a motionless mirror, grandly reflecting in its deep bosom all the airy depths of the sky, and the house, and the trees turned upside down, and had grown black, as it were. Everything was silent round about. There was no noise anywhere.

"Look, how beautiful!"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna to Vladímir Sergyéitch, as he ap-

proached her;—" down below there, in the pond, a star has kindled its fire by the side of the light in the house; the house-light is red, the other is golden. And yonder comes grandmamma,"—she added in a loud voice.

From behind a clump of lilac-bushes a small calash made its appearance. Two men were drawing it. In it sat an old lady, all wrapped up, all doubled over, with her head resting on her breast. The ruffle of her white cap almost completely concealed her withered and contracted little face. The tiny calash halted in front of the terrace. Ipátoff emerged from the drawing-room, and his little daughters ran out after him. They had been constantly slipping from room to room all the evening, like little mice.

" I wish you good evening, dear mother,"—said Ipátoff, stepping up close to the old woman, and elevating his voice.—" How do you feel? "

" I have come to take a look at you,"—said the old woman in a dull voice, and with an effort.—" What a glorious evening it is. I have been asleep all day, and now my feet have begun to ache. Okh, those feet of mine! They don't serve me, but they ache."

" Permit me, dear mother, to present to you our neighbour, Astákhoff, Vladímir Sergyéitch."

" I am very glad to meet you,"—returned the old woman, scanning him with her large, black, but dim-sighted eyes.—" I beg that you will love

my son. He is a fine man; I gave him what education I could; of course, I did the best a woman could. He is still somewhat flighty, but, God willing, he will grow steady, and 't is high time he did; 't is time for me to surrender matters to him. Is that you, Nádya?"—added the old woman, glancing at Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"Yes, grandmamma."

"And is Másha pouring tea?"

"Yes, grandmamma, she is pouring tea."

"And who else is there?"

"Iván Ílitch, and Egór Kapítonitch."

"The husband of Matryóna Márkovna?"

"Yes, dear mother."

The old woman mumbled with her lips.

"Well, good. But why is it, Mísha, that I can't manage to get hold of the overseer? Order him to come to me very early to-morrow morning; I shall have a great deal of business to arrange with him. I see that nothing goes as it should with you, without me. Come, that will do, I am tired; take me away. . . . Farewell, bátiushka;[1] I don't remember your name and patronymic,"—she added, addressing Vladímir Sergyéitch. "Pardon an old woman. But don't come with me, grandchildren, it is n't necessary. All you care for is to run all the time. Másha spoils you. Well, start on."

[1] Literally, "dear little father": the genuinely Russian mode of address to a man of any class, as *mátushka* ("dear little mother") is for women of all classes.—TRANSLATOR.

The old woman's head, which she had raised with difficulty, fell back again on her breast. . . .

The tiny calash started, and rolled softly away.

"How old is your mother?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Only in her seventy-third year; but it is twenty-six years since her legs failed her; that happened soon after the demise of my late father. But she used to be a beauty."

All remained silent for a while.

Suddenly, Nadézhda Alexyéevna gave a start.

"Was that—a bat flying past? Aï, what a fright!"

And she hastily returned to the drawing-room.

"It is time for me to go home, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch; order my horse to be saddled."

"And it is time for me to be going, too,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Where are you going?"—said Ipátoff.—"Spend the night here. Nadézhda Alexyéevna has only two versts to ride, while you have fully twelve. And what 's your hurry, too, Nadézhda Alexyéevna? Wait for the moon; it will soon be up now. It will be lighter to ride."

"Very well,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna.—"It is a long time since I had a moonlight ride."

"And will you spend the night?"—Ipátoff asked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Really, I don't know. . . However, if I do not incommode you . . . ."

"Not in the least, I assure you; I will immediately order a chamber to be prepared for you."

"But it is nice to ride by moonlight,"—began Nadézhda Alexyéevna, as soon as candles were brought, tea was served, and Ipátoff and Egór Kapítonitch had sat down to play preference together, while The Folding Soul seated himself silently beside them:—"especially through the forest, between the walnut-trees. It is both terrifying and agreeable, and what a strange play of light and shade there is—it always seems as though some one were stealing up behind you, or in front of you. . . ."

Vladímir Sergyéitch smirked condescendingly.

"And here 's another thing,"—she went on; —"have you ever happened to sit beside the forest on a warm, dark, tranquil night? At such times it always seems to me as though two persons were hotly disputing in an almost inaudible whisper, behind me, close at my very ear."

"That is the blood beating,"—said Ipátoff.

"You describe in a very poetical way,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch. Nadézhda Alexyéevna glanced at him.

"Do you think so? . . . In that case, my description would not please Másha."

"Why? Is not Márya Pávlovna fond of poetry?"

"No; she thinks all that sort of thing is made up—is all false; and she does not like that."

"A strange reproach!"—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch. "Made up! How could it be otherwise? But, after all, what are composers for?"

"Well, there, that 's exactly the point; but I am sure you cannot be fond of poetry."

"On the contrary, I love good verses, when they really are good and melodious, and—how shall I say it?—when they present ideas, thoughts. . . ."

Márya Pávlovna rose.

Nadézhda Alexyéevna turned swiftly toward her.

"Whither art thou going, Másha?"

"To put the children to bed. It is almost nine o'clock."

"But cannot they go to bed without thee?"

But Márya Pávlovna took the children by the hand and went away with them.

"She is out of sorts to-day,"—remarked Nadézhda Alexyéevna;—"and I know why,"—she added in an undertone.—"But it will pass off."

"Allow me to inquire,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch,—"where you intend to spend the winter?"

"Perhaps here, perhaps in Petersburg. It seems to me that I shall be bored in Petersburg."

"In Petersburg! Good gracious! How is that possible?"

And Vladímir Sergyéitch began to describe all the comforts, advantages, and charm of life in our capital. Nadézhda Alexyéevna listened to him with attention, never taking her eyes from him. She seemed to be committing his features to memory, and laughed to herself from time to time.

"I see that you are very eloquent,"—she said at last.—"I shall be obliged to spend the winter in Petersburg."

"You will not repent of it,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"I never repent of anything; it is not worth the bother. If you have perpetrated a blunder, try to forget it as speedily as possible—that 's all."

"Allow me to ask,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch, after a brief pause, and in the French language;—"have you known Márya Pávlovna long?"

"Allow me to ask,"—retorted Nadézhda Alexyéevna, with a swift laugh;—"why you have put precisely that question to me in French?"

"Because . . . . for no particular reason. . . ."

Again Nadézhda Alexyéevna laughed.

"No; I have not known her very long. But she is a remarkable girl, is n't she?"

"She is very original,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, through his teeth.

"And in your mouth—in the mouth of posi-

tive persons—does that constitute praise? I do not think so. Perhaps I seem original to you, also? But,"—she added, rising from her seat and casting a glance through the window,—"the moon must have risen; that is its light on the poplars. It is time to depart. . . . I will go and give order that Little Beauty shall be saddled."

"He is already saddled, ma'am,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna's groom, stepping out from the shadow in the garden into a band of light which fell on the terrace.

"Ah! Well, that 's very good, indeed! Másha, where art thou? Come and bid me goodbye."

Márya Pávlovna made her appearance from the adjoining room. The men rose from the card-table.

"So you are going already?"—inquired Ipátoff.

"I am; it is high time."

She approached the door leading into the garden.

"What a night!"—she exclaimed.—"Come here; hold out your face to it; do you feel how it seems to breathe upon you? And what fragrance! all the flowers have waked up now. They have waked up—and we are preparing to go to sleep. . . . . Ah, by the way, Másha,"—she added:—"I have told Vladímir Sergyéitch, you know,

that thou art not fond of poetry. And now, farewell . . . yonder comes my horse. . . ."

And she ran briskly down the steps of the terrace, swung herself lightly into the saddle, said, "Good-bye until to-morrow!"—and lashing her horse on the neck with her riding-switch, she galloped off in the direction of the dam. . . . The groom set off at a trot after her.

All gazed after her. . . .

"Until to-morrow!"—her voice rang out once more from behind the poplars.

The hoof-beats were still audible for a long time in the silence of the summer night. At last, Ipátoff proposed that they should go into the house again.

"It really is very nice out of doors,"—he said; —"but we must finish our game."

All obeyed him. Vladímir Sergyéitch began to question Márya Pávlovna as to why she did not like poetry.

"Verses do not please me,"—she returned, with apparent reluctance.

"But perhaps you have not read many verses?"

"I have not read them myself, but I have had them read to me."

"And is it possible that they did not please you?"

"No; none of them."

"Not even Púshkin's verses?"

"Not even Púshkin's."

"Why?"

Márya Pávlovna made no answer; but Ipátoff, twisting round across the back of his chair, remarked, with a good-natured laugh, that she not only did not like verses, but sugar also, and, in general, could not endure anything sweet.

"But, surely, there are verses which are not sweet,"—retorted Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"For example?"—Márya Pávlovna asked him.

Vladímir Sergyéitch scratched behind his ear. . . . . He himself knew very few verses by heart, especially of the sort which were not sweet.

"Why, here now,"—he exclaimed at last;—"do you know Púshkin's 'The Upas-Tree'?[1] No? That poem cannot possibly be called sweet."

"Recite it,"—said Márya Pávlovna, dropping her eyes.

Vladímir Sergyéitch first stared at the ceiling, frowned, mumbled something to himself, and at last recited "The Upas-Tree."

After the first four lines, Márya Pávlovna slowly raised her eyes, and when Vladímir Sergyéitch ended, she said, with equal slowness:

[1] The poem, after describing the deadly qualities of the upas-tree, narrates how a potentate sent one of his slaves to bring him flowers from it. The slave, thoroughly aware of his danger, fulfilled his sovereign's behest, returned with branches of the tree, and dropped dead.—TRANSLATOR.

"Please recite it again."

"So these verses do please you?"—asked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Recite it again."

Vladímir Sergyéitch repeated "The Upas-Tree." Márya Pávlovna rose, went out into the next room, and returned with a sheet of paper, an inkstand and a pen.

"Please write that down for me,"—she said to Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Certainly; with pleasure,"—he replied, beginning to write.—"But I must confess that I am puzzled to know why these verses have pleased you so. I recited them simply to prove to you that not all verses are sweet."

"So am I!"—exclaimed Ipátoff.—"What do you think of those verses, Iván Ílitch?"

Iván Ílitch, according to his wont, merely glanced at Ipátoff, but did not utter a word.

"Here, ma'am,—I have finished,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, as he placed an interrogation-point at the end of the last line.

Márya Pávlovna thanked him, and carried the written sheet off to her own room.

Half an hour later supper was served, and an hour later all the guests dispersed to their rooms. Vladímir Sergyéitch had repeatedly addressed Márya Pávlovna; but it was difficult to conduct a conversation with her, and his anecdotes did not seem to interest her greatly. He probably

would have fallen asleep as soon as he got into bed had he not been hindered by his neighbour, Egór Kapítonitch. Matryóna Márkovna's husband, after he was fully undressed and had got into bed, talked for a very long time with his servant, and kept bestowing reprimands on him. Every word he uttered was perfectly audible to Vladímir Sergyéitch: only a thin partition separated them.

"Hold the candle in front of thy breast,"—said Egór Kapítonitch, in a querulous voice;—"hold it so that I can see thy face. Thou hast aged me, aged me, thou conscienceless man—hast aged me completely."

"But, for mercy's sake, Egór Kapítonitch, how have I aged you?"—the servant's dull and sleepy voice made itself heard.

"How? I 'll tell thee how. How many times have I said to thee: 'Mítka,' I have said to thee, 'when thou goest a-visiting with me, always take two garments of each sort, especially' . . . . hold the candle in front of thy breast . . . . 'especially underwear.' And what hast thou done to me to-day?"

"What, sir?"

"'What, sir?' What am I to put on to-morrow?"

"Why, the same things you wore to-day, sir."

"Thou hast aged me, malefactor, aged me. I was almost beside myself with the heat to-day,

as it was. Hold the candle in front of thy breast, I tell thee, and don't sleep when thy master is talking to thee."

"Well, but Matryóna Márkovna said, sir, 'That 's enough. Why do you always take such a mass of things with you? They only get worn out for nothing.'"

"Matryóna Márkovna . . . . Is it a woman's business, pray, to enter into that? You have aged me. Okh, you have made me old before my time!"

"Yes; and Yakhím said the same thing, sir."

"What 's that thou saidst?"

"I say, Yakhím said the same thing, sir."

"Yakhím! Yakhím!"—repeated Egór Kapítonitch, reproachfully.—"Ekh, you have aged me, ye accursed, and don't even know how to speak Russian intelligibly. Yakhím! Who 's Yakhím! Efrím,—well, that might be allowed to pass, it is permissible to say that; because the genuine Greek name is Evthímius, dost understand me? . . . Hold the candle in front of thy breast. . . . So, for the sake of brevity, thou mayest say Efrím, if thou wilt, but not Yakhím by any manner of means. Yákhim!"[1] added Egór Kapítonitch, emphasising the syllable *Ya*. —"You have aged me, ye malefactors. Hold the candle in front of thy breast!"

And for a long time, Egór Kapítonitch con-

[1] It should be Akím, popular for Iakínthos, Hyacinth.—TRANSLATOR.

tinued to berate his servant, in spite of sighs, coughs, and other tokens of impatience on the part of Vladímir Sergyéitch. . . .

At last he dismissed his Mítka, and fell asleep; but Vladímir Sergyéitch was no better off for that: Egór Kapítonitch snored so mightily and in so deep a voice, with such playful transitions from high tones to the very lowest, with such accompanying whistlings, and even snappings, that it seemed as though the very partition were shaking in response to him; poor Vladímir Sergyéitch almost wept. It was very stifling in the chamber which had been allotted to him, and the feather-bed whereon he was lying embraced his whole body in a sort of crawling heat.

At last, in despair, Vladímir Sergyéitch rose, opened the window, and began with avidity to inhale the nocturnal freshness. The window looked out on the park. It was light overhead, the round face of the full moon was now clearly reflected in the pond, and stretched itself out in a long, golden sheaf of slowly transfused spangles. On one of the paths Vladímir Sergyéitch espied a figure in woman's garb; he looked more intently; it was Márya Pávlovna; in the moonlight her face seemed pale. She stood motionless, and suddenly began to speak. . . . Vladímir Sergyéitch cautiously put out his head. . . .

"But a man—with glance imperious—
Sent a man to the Upas-tree . . . ."

reached his ear. . . .

"Come,"—he thought,—"the verses must have taken effect. . . ."

And he began to listen with redoubled attention. . . . But Márya Pávlovna speedily fell silent, and turned her face more directly toward him; he could distinguish her large, dark eyes, her severe brows and lips. . . .

Suddenly, she started, wheeled round, entered the shadow cast by a dense wall of lofty acacias, and disappeared. Vladímir Sergyéitch stood for a considerable time at the window, then got into bed again, but did not fall asleep very soon.

"A strange being,"—he thought, as he tossed from side to side;—"and yet they say that there is nothing particular in the provinces. . . . The idea! A strange being! I shall ask her to-morrow what she was doing in the park."

And Egór Kapítonitch continued to snore as before.

## III

On the following morning Vladímir Sergyéitch awoke quite late, and immediately after the general tea and breakfast in the dining-room, drove off home to finish his business on his estate, in spite of all old Ipátoff's attempts to detain him.

Márya Pávlovna also was present at the tea; but Vladímir Sergyéitch did not consider it necessary to question her concerning her late stroll of the night before; he was one of the people who find it difficult to surrender themselves for two days in succession to any unusual thoughts and assumptions whatsoever. He would have been obliged to discuss verses, and the so-called " poetical " mood wearied him very quickly. He spent the whole day until dinner in the fields, ate with great appetite, dozed off, and when he woke up, tried to take up the clerk's accounts; but before he had finished the first page, he ordered his tarantás to be harnessed, and set off for Ipátoff's. Evidently, even positive people do not bear about in their breasts hearts of stone, and they are no more fond of being bored than other plain mortals.

As he drove upon the dam he heard voices and the sound of music. They were singing Russian ballads in chorus in Ipátoff's house. He found the whole company which he had left in the morning on the terrace; all, Nadézhda Alexyéevna among the rest, were sitting in a circle around a man of two-and-thirty—a swarthy-skinned, black-eyed, black-haired man in a velvet jacket, with a scarlet kerchief carelessly knotted about his neck, and a guitar in his hands. This was Piótr Alexyéevitch Véretyeff, brother of Nadézhda Alexyéevna. On catching sight of

Vladímir Sergyéitch, old Ipátoff advanced to meet him with a joyful cry, led him up to Véretyeff, and introduced them to each other. After exchanging the customary greetings with his new acquaintance, Astákhoff made a respectful bow to the latter's sister.

"We 're singing songs in country fashion, Vladímir Sergyéitch,"—began Ipátoff, and pointing to Véretyeff he added:—"Piótr Alexyéitch is our leader,—and what a leader! Just you listen to him!"

"This is very pleasant,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Will not you join the choir?"—Nadézhda Alexyéevna asked him.

"I should be heartily glad to do so, but I have no voice."

"That does n't matter! See, Egór Kapítonitch is singing, and I 'm singing. All you have to do is to chime in. Pray, sit down; and do thou strike up, my dear fellow!"

"What song shall we sing now?"—said Véretyeff, thrumming the guitar; and suddenly stopping short, he looked at Márya Pávlovna, who was sitting by his side.—"I think it is your turn now,"—he said to her.

"No; do you sing,"—replied Márya Pávlovna.

"Here 's a song now: 'Adown dear Mother Volga'"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, with importance.

"No, we will save that up for the last,"—replied Véretyeff, and tinkling the strings of the guitar, he struck up, in slow measure, "The sun is setting."

He sang splendidly, dashingly, and blithely. His manly face, already expressive, became still more animated when he sang; now and then he shrugged his shoulders, suddenly pressed the strings with his palm, raised his arm, shook his curls, and darted a falcon-like look around him. More than once in Moscow he had seen the famous Ilyá, and he imitated him. The chorus chimed in lustily. Márya Pávlovna's voice separated itself in a melodious flood from the other voices; it seemed to drag them after it; but she would not sing alone, and Véretyeff remained the leader to the end.

They sang a great many other songs. . . .

In the meantime, along with the evening shadows, a thunder-storm drew on. From noonday it had been steaming hot, and thunder had kept rumbling in the distance; but now a broad thunder-cloud, which had long lain like a leaden pall on the very rim of the horizon, began to increase and show itself above the crests of the trees, the stifling air began to quiver more distinctly, shaken more and more violently by the approaching storm; the wind rose, rustled the foliage abruptly, died into silence, again made a prolonged clamour, and began to roar; a surly

gloom flitted over the earth, swiftly dispelling the last reflection of the sunset glow; dense clouds suddenly floated up, as though rending themselves free, and sailed across the sky; a fine rain began to patter down, the lightning flashed in a red flame, and the thunder rumbled heavily and angrily.

"Let us go,"—said old Ipátoff,—"or we shall be drenched."

All rose.

"Directly!"—exclaimed Piótr Alexyéitch.—"One more song, the last. Listen:

"Akh, thou house, thou house of mine,
Thou new house of mine . . . ."

he struck up in a loud voice, briskly striking the strings of the guitar with his whole hand. "My new house of maple-wood," joined in the chorus, as though reluctantly carried away. Almost at the same moment, the rain began to beat down in streams; but Véretyeff sang "My house" to the end. From time to time, drowned by the claps of thunder, the dashing ballad seemed more dashing than ever beneath the noisy rattle and gurgling of the rain. At last the final detonation of the chorus rang out—and the whole company ran, laughing, into the drawing-room. Loudest of all laughed the little girls, Ipátoff's daughters, as they shook the rain-drops from their frocks. But, by way of precaution, Ipátoff closed the

window, and locked the door; and Egór Kapítonitch lauded him, remarking that Matryóna Márkovna also always gave orders to shut up whenever there was a thunder-storm, because electricity is more capable of acting in an empty space. Bodryakóff looked him straight in the face, stepped aside, and overturned a chair. Such trifling mishaps were constantly happening to him.

The thunder-storm passed over very soon. The doors and windows were opened again, and the rooms were filled with moist fragrance. Tea was brought. After tea the old men sat down to cards again. Iván Ílitch joined them, as usual. Vladímir Sergyéitch was about to go to Márya Pávlovna, who was sitting at the window with Véretyeff; but Nadézhda Alexyéevna called him to her, and immediately entered into a fervent discussion with him about Petersburg and Petersburg life. She attacked it; Vladímir Sergyéitch began to defend it. Nadézhda Alexyéevna appeared to be trying to keep him by her side.

"What are you wrangling about?"—inquired Véretyeff, rising and approaching them.

He swayed lazily from side to side as he walked; in all his movements there was perceptible something which was not exactly carelessness, nor yet exactly fatigue.

"Still about Petersburg,"—replied Nadézhda

Alexyéevna.—"Vladímir Sergyéitch cannot sufficiently praise it."

"'T is a fine town,"—remarked Véretyeff;—"but, in my opinion, it is nice everywhere. By Heaven, it is. If one only has two or three women, and—pardon my frankness—wine, a man really has nothing left to wish for."

"You surprise me,"—retorted Vladímir Sergyéitch. "Can it be possible that you are really of one opinion, that there does not exist for the cultured man . . . ."

"Perhaps . . . . in fact . . . . I agree with you,"—interrupted Véretyeff, who, notwithstanding all his courtesy, had a habit of not listening to the end of retorts;—"but that 's not in my line; I 'm not a philosopher."

"Neither am I a philosopher,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"and I have not the slightest desire to be one; but here it is a question of something entirely different."

Véretyeff cast an abstracted glance at his sister, and she, with a faint laugh, bent toward him, and whispered in a low voice:

"Petrúsha, my dear, imitate Egór Kapítonitch for us, please."

Véretyeff's face instantly changed, and, Heaven knows by what miracle, became remarkably like the face of Egór Kapítonitch, although the features of the two faces had absolutely nothing in common, and Véretyeff himself barely

wrinkled up his nose and pulled down the corners of his lips.

"Of course,"—he began to whisper, in a voice which was the exact counterpart of Egór Kapítonitch's,—"Matryóna Márkovna is a severe lady on the score of manners; but, on the other hand, she is a model wife. It is true that no matter what I may have said . . . ."

"The Biriúloff girls know it all,"—put in Nadézhda Alexyéevna, hardly restraining her laughter.

"Everything is known on the following day,"—replied Véretyeff, with such a comical grimace, with such a perturbed sidelong glance, that even Vladímir Sergyéitch burst out laughing.

"I see that you possess great talent for mimicry,"—he remarked.

Véretyeff passed his hand over his face, his features resumed their ordinary expression, while Nadézhda Alexyéevna exclaimed:

"Oh, yes! he can mimic any one whom he wishes. . . . He 's a master hand at that."

"And would you be able to imitate me, for example?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"I should think so!"—returned Nadézhda Alexyéevna:—"of course."

"Akh, pray do me the favour to represent me,"—said Astákhoff, turning to Véretyeff.—"I beg that you will not stand on ceremony."

"And so you too have believed her?"—replied Véretyeff, slightly screwing up one eye, and im-

parting to his voice the sound of Astákhoff's voice, but so cautiously and slightly that only Nadézhda Alexyéevna noticed it, and bit her lips. —"Please do not believe her; she will tell you other untrue things about me."

"And if you only knew what an actor he is!" —pursued Nadézhda Alexyéevna:—"he plays every conceivable sort of a part. And so splendidly! He is our stage-manager, and our prompter, and everything you like. It 's a pity that you are going away so soon."

"Sister, thy partiality blinds thee,"—remarked Véretyeff, in a pompous tone, but still with the same touch of Astákhoff.—"What will Mr. Astákhoff think of thee?—He will regard thee as a rustic."

"No, indeed,"—Vladímir Sergyéitch was beginning. . . . .

"See here, Petrúsha,"—interposed Nadézhda Alexyéevna;—"please show us how a drunken man is utterly unable to get his handkerchief out of his pocket; or no: show us, rather, how a boy catches a fly on the window, and how it buzzes under his fingers."

"Thou art a regular child,"—replied Véretyeff.

Nevertheless he rose, and stepping to the window, beside which Márya Pávlovna was sitting, he began to pass his hand across the panes, and represent how a small boy catches a fly.

The accuracy with which he imitated its pitiful squeak was really amazing. It seemed as though a live fly were actually struggling under his fingers. Nadézhda Alexyéevna burst out laughing, and gradually every one in the room got to laughing. Márya Pávlovna's face alone underwent no change, not even her lips quivered. She sat with downcast eyes, but raised them at last, and casting a serious glance at Véretyeff, she muttered through her set teeth:

"What possesses you to make a clown of yourself?"

Véretyeff instantly turned away from the window, and, after standing still for a moment in the middle of the room, he went out on the terrace, and thence into the garden, which had already grown perfectly dark.

"How amusing that Piótr Alexyéitch is!"—exclaimed Egór Kapítonitch, slapping down the seven of trumps with a flourish on some one else's ace.—"Really, he 's very amusing!"

Nadézhda Alexyéevna rose, and hastily approaching Márya Pávlovna, asked her in an undertone:

"What didst thou say to my brother?"

"Nothing,"—replied the other.

"What dost thou mean by 'nothing'? Impossible."

And after waiting a little, Nadézhda Alexyéevna said: "Come!"—took Márya Pávlovna by

the hand, forced her to rise, and went off with her into the garden.

Vladímir Sergyéitch gazed after the two young girls not without perplexity. But they were not absent long; a quarter of an hour later they returned, and Piótr Alexyéitch entered the room with them.

"What a splendid night!" exclaimed Nadézhda Alexyéevna, as she entered.—"How beautiful it is in the garden!"

"Akh, yes. By the way,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"allow me to inquire, Márya Pávlovna, whether it was you whom I saw in the garden last night?"

Márya Pávlovna gave him a swift look straight in the eyes.

"Moreover, so far as I could make out, you were declaiming Púshkin's 'The Upas-Tree.'"

Véretyeff frowned slightly, and he also began to stare at Astákhoff.

"It really was I,"—said Márya Pávlovna;—"only, I was not declaiming anything; I never declaim."

"Perhaps it seemed so to me,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"but . . ."

"It did seem so to you?"—remarked Márya Pávlovna, coldly.

"What 's 'The Upas-Tree'?"—inquired Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"Why, don't you know?"—retorted Astá-

khoff.—" Do you mean to say you don't remember Púshkin's verses: ' On the unhealthy, meagre soil '? "

" Somehow I don't remember. . . . That upas-tree is a poisonous tree, is n't it? "

" Yes."

" Like the datura. . . . Dost remember, Másha, how beautiful the datura were on our balcony, in the moonlight, with their long, white blossoms? Dost remember what fragrance poured from them,—so sweet, insinuating, and insidious? "

" An insidious fragrance! "—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch.

" Yes; insidious. What are you surprised at? They say it is dangerous, but it is attractive. Why can evil attract? Evil should not be beautiful."

" Oh, what theories! " — remarked Piótr Alexyéitch;—" how far away we have got from verses! "

" I recited those verses yesterday evening to Márya Pávlovna," interposed Vladímir Sergyéitch;—" and they pleased her greatly."

" Akh, please recite them,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

" Certainly, madam."

And Astákhoff recited " The Upas-Tree."

" Too bombastic,"—ejaculated Véretyeff, as though against his will, as soon as Vladímir Sergyéitch had finished.

" The poem is too bombastic? "

" No, not the poem. . . . Excuse me, it seems to me that you do not recite with sufficient simplicity. The thing speaks for itself; however, I may be mistaken."

" No, thou art not mistaken,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna, pausing between her words.

" Oh, yes; that is a matter of course! In thy eyes I am a genius, an extremely gifted man, who knows everything, can do everything; unfortunately, he is overcome with laziness; is n't that so? "

Nadézhda Alexyéevna merely shook her head.

" I shall not quarrel with you; you must know best about that,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch, somewhat sulkily.—" That 's not in my line."

" I made a mistake, pardon me,"—ejaculated Véretyeff, hastily.

In the meantime, the game of cards had come to an end.

" Akh, by the way,"—said Ipátoff, as he rose; —" Vladímir Sergyéitch, one of the local landed proprietors, a neighbour, a very fine and worthy man, Akílin, Gavríla Stepánitch, has commissioned me to ask you whether you will not do him the honour to be present at his ball,—that is, I just put it so, for beauty of style, and said ' ball,' but it is only an evening party with dancing, quite informal. He would have called upon

you himself without fail, only he was afraid of disturbing you."

"I am much obliged to the gentleman,"—returned Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"but it is imperatively necessary that I should return home. . . ."

"Why—but when do you suppose the ball takes place? 'T is to-morrow. To-morrow is Gavríla Stepánitch's Name-day. One day more won't matter, and how much pleasure you will give him! And it 's only ten versts from here. If you will allow, we will take you thither."

"Really, I don't know,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"And are you going?"

"The whole family! And Nadézhda Alexyéevna and Piótr Alexyéitch,—everybody is going!"

"You may invite me on the spot for the fifth quadrille, if you like,"—remarked Nadézhda Alexyéevna.—"The first four are already bespoken."

"You are very kind; and are you already engaged for the mazurka?"

"I? Let me think . . . . no, I think I am not."

"In that case, if you will be so kind, I should like to have the honour . . . ."

"That means that you will go? Very good. Certainly."

"Bravo!"—exclaimed Ipátoff.—"Well, Vladímir Sergyéitch, you have put us under an ob-

ligation. Gavrílo Stepánitch will simply go into raptures. Is n't that so, Iván Ílitch?"

Iván Ílitch would have preferred to hold his peace, according to his wont, but thought it better to utter a sound of approval.

"What possessed thee,"—said Piótr Alexyéitch an hour later to his sister, as he sat with her in a light two-wheeled cart, which he was driving himself,—"what possessed thee to saddle thyself with that sour-visaged fellow for the mazurka?"

"I have reasons of my own for that,"—replied Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"What reasons?—permit me to inquire."

"That 's my secret."

"Oho!"

And with his whip he lightly flicked the horse, which was beginning to prick up its ears, snort, and shy. It was frightened by the shadow of a huge willow bush which fell across the road, dimly illuminated by the moon.

"And shalt thou dance with Másha?"—Nadézhda Alexyéevna, in her turn, questioned her brother.

"Yes," he said indifferently.

"Yes! yes!"—repeated Nadézhda Alexyéevna, reproachfully.—"You men,"—she added, after a brief pause,—"positively do not deserve to be loved by nice women."

"Dost think so? Well, and that sour-visaged Petersburger—does he deserve it?"

"Sooner than thou."

"Really!"

And Piótr Alexyéitch recited, with a sigh:

"What a mission, O Creator,
To be . . . . . the brother of a grown-up sister!"

Nadézhda Alexyéevna burst out laughing.

"I cause thee a great deal of trouble, there 's no denying that. I have a commission to thee."

"Really?—I had n't the slightest suspicion of that."

"I 'm speaking of Másha."

"On what score?"

Nadézhda Alexyéevna's face assumed a slight expression of pain.

"Thou knowest thyself,"—she said softly.

"Ah, I understand!—What 's to be done, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, ma'am? I love to drink with a good friend, ma'am, sinful man that I am; I love it, ma'am."

"Stop, brother, please don't talk like that! . . . This is no jesting matter."

"Tram-tram-tam-poom!"—muttered Piótr Alexyéitch through his teeth.

"It is thy perdition, and thou jestest. . . ."

"The farm-hand is sowing the grain, his wife
does not agree . . . ."

struck up Piótr Alexyéitch loudly, slapped the horse with the reins, and it dashed onward at a brisk trot.

## IV

On reaching home Véretyeff did not undress, and a couple of hours later, when the flush of dawn was just colouring the sky, he was no longer in the house.

Half-way between his estate and Ipátoff's, on the very brink of a broad ravine, stood a small birch grove. The young trees grew very close together, and no axe had yet touched their graceful trunks; a shadow which was not dense, but continuous, spread from the tiny leaves on the soft, thin grass, all mottled with the golden heads of buttercups,[1] the white dots of wood-campanula, and the tiny deep-crimson crosses of wild pinks. The recently-risen sun flooded the whole grove with a powerful though not brilliant light; dewdrops glittered everywhere, while here and there large drops kindled and glowed red; everything exhaled freshness, life, and that innocent triumph of the first moments of the morning, when everything is still so bright and still so silent. The only thing audible was the carolling voices of the larks above the distant fields, and in the grove itself two or three small birds were

[1] The unpoetical Russian name is "chicken-blindness" (night-blindness).—Translator.

executing, in a leisurely manner, their brief songs, and then, apparently, listening to see how their performance had turned out. From the damp earth arose a strong, healthy scent; a pure, light breeze fluttered all about in cool gusts. Morning, glorious morning, breathed forth from everything—everything looked and smiled of the morning, like the rosy, freshly-washed face of a baby who has just waked up.

Not far from the ravine, in the middle of a small glade, on an outspread cloak, sat Véretyeff. Márya Pávlovna was standing beside him, leaning against a birch-tree, with her hands clasped behind her.

Both were silent. Márya Pávlovna was gazing fixedly into the far distance; a white scarf had slipped from her head to her shoulders, the errant breeze was stirring and lifting the ends of her hastily-knotted hair. Véretyeff sat bent over, tapping the grass with a small branch.

"Well,"—he began at last,—"are you angry with me?"

Márya Pávlovna made no reply.

Véretyeff darted a glance at her.

"Másha, are you angry?"—he repeated.

Márya Pávlovna scanned him with a swift glance from head to foot, turned slightly away, and said:

"Yes."

"What for?"—asked Véretyeff, and flung away his branch.

Again Márya Pávlovna made no reply.

"But, as a matter of fact, you have a right to be angry with me,"—began Véretyeff, after a brief pause.—"You must regard me as a man who is not only frivolous, but even . . . ."

"You do not understand me,"—interrupted Márya Pávlovna.—"I am not in the least angry with you on my own account."

"On whose account, then?"

"On your own."

Véretyeff raised his head and laughed.

"Ah! I understand!"—he said.—"Again! again the thought is beginning to agitate you: 'Why don't I make something of myself?' Do you know what, Másha, you are a wonderful being; by Heaven, you are! You worry so much about other people and so little about yourself. There is not a bit of egoism in you; really, really there is n't. There 's no other girl in the world like you. It 's a pity about one thing: I decidedly am not worthy of your affection; I say that without jesting."

"So much the worse for you. You feel and do nothing."—Again Véretyeff laughed.

"Másha, take your hand from behind your back, and give it to me,"—he said, with insinuating affection in his voice.

Márya Pávlovna merely shrugged her shoulders.

"Give me your beautiful, honest hand; I want to kiss it respectfully and tenderly. Thus does a giddy-pated scholar kiss the hand of his condescending tutor."

And Véretyeff reached out toward Márya Pávlovna.

"Enough of that!"—said she. "You are always laughing and jesting, and you will jest away your life like that."

"H'm! jest away my life! A new expression! But I hope, Márya Pávlovna, that you used the verb 'to jest' in the active sense?"

Márya Pávlovna contracted her brows.

"Enough of that, Véretyeff,"—she repeated.

"To jest away life,"—went on Véretyeff, half rising;—"but you are imagining me as worse than I am; you are wasting your life in seriousness. Do you know, Másha, you remind me of a scene from Púshkin's 'Don Juan.' You have not read Púshkin's 'Don Juan'?"

"No."

"Yes, I had forgotten, you see, that you do not read verses.—In that poem guests come to a certain Laura; she drives them all away and remains alone with Carlos. The two go out on the balcony; the night is wonderful. Laura admires, and Carlos suddenly begins to demonstrate to her that she will grow old in course of

time.—'Well,' replies Laura, 'it may be cold and rainy in Paris now, but here, with us, "the night is redolent of orange and of laurel." Why make guesses at the future?' Look around you, Másha; is it not beautiful here? See how everything is enjoying life, how young everything is. And are n't we young ourselves?"

Véretyeff approached Márya Pávlovna; she did not move away from him, but she did not turn her head toward him.

"Smile, Másha,"—he went on;—"only with your kind smile, not with your usual grin. I love your kind smile. Raise your proud, stern eyes.—What ails you? You turn away. Stretch out your hand to me, at least."

"Akh, Véretyeff,"—began Másha;—"you know that I do not understand how to express myself. You have told me about that Laura. But she was a woman, you see. . . . A woman may be pardoned for not thinking of the future."

"When you speak, Másha,"—returned Véretyeff,—"you blush incessantly with self-love and modesty: the blood fairly flows in a crimson flood into your cheeks. I 'm awfully fond of that in you."

Márya Pávlovna looked Véretyeff straight in the eye.

"Farewell,"—she said, and threw her scarf over her head.

Véretyeff held her back. "Enough, enough.

Stay!"—he cried.—"Come, why are you going? Issue your commands! Do you want me to enter the service, to become an agriculturist? Do you want me to publish romances with accompaniment for the guitar; to print a collection of poems, or of drawings; to busy myself with painting, sculpture, dancing on the rope? I 'll do anything, anything, anything you command, if only you will be satisfied with me! Come, really now, Másha, believe me."

Again Márya Pávlovna looked at him.

"You will do all that in words only, not in deeds. You declare that you will obey me . . . ."

"Of course I do."

"You obey, but how many times have I begged you . . . ."

"What about?"

Márya Pávlovna hesitated.

"Not to drink liquor,"—she said at last.

Véretyeff laughed.

"Ekh, Másha! And you are at it, too! My sister is worrying herself to death over that also. But, in the first place, I 'm not a drunkard at all; and in the second place, do you know why I drink? Look yonder, at that swallow. . . . Do you see how boldly it manages its tiny body, —and hurls it wherever it wishes? Now it has soared aloft, now it has darted downward. It has even piped with joy: do you hear? So that 's why I drink, Másha, in order to feel those same

sensations which that swallow experiences. . . . Hurl yourself whithersoever you will, soar wheresoever you take a fancy . . . ."

"But to what end?"—interrupted Másha.

"What do you mean by that? What is one to live on then?"

"But is n't it possible to get along without liquor?"

"No, it is not; we are all damaged, rumpled. There 's passion . . . . it produces the same effect. That 's why I love you."

"Like wine. . . . I 'm much obliged to you."

"No, Másha, I do not love you like wine. Stay, I 'll prove it to you sometime,—when we are married, say, and go abroad together. Do you know, I am planning in advance how I shall lead you in front of the Venus of Milo. At this point it will be appropriate to say:

> "And when she stands with serious eyes
> Before the Chyprian of Milos—
> Twain are they, and the marble in comparison
> Suffers, it would seem, affront. . . . .

"What makes me talk constantly in poetry today? It must be that this morning is affecting me. What air! 'T is exactly as though one were quaffing wine."

"Wine again,"—remarked Márya Pávlovna.

"What of that! A morning like this, and you with me, and not feel intoxicated! ' With serious

eyes . . . .' Yes,"—pursued Véretyeff, gazing intently at Márya Pávlovna,—" that is so. . . . For I remember, I have beheld, rarely, but yet I have beheld these dark, magnificent eyes, I have beheld them tender! And how beautiful they are then! Come, don't turn away, Másha; pray, smile at least . . . . show me your eyes merry, at all events, if they will not vouchsafe me a tender glance."

" Stop, Véretyeff,"—said Márya Pávlovna. —" Release me! It is time for me to go home."

" But I 'm going to make you laugh,"—interposed Véretyeff; " by Heaven, I will make you laugh. Eh, by the way, yonder runs a hare. . . ."

" Where? "—asked Márya Pávlovna.

" Yonder, beyond the ravine, across the field of oats. Some one must have startled it; they don't run in the morning. I 'll stop it on the instant, if you like."

And Véretyeff whistled loudly. The hare immediately squatted, twitched its ears, drew up its fore paws, straightened itself up, munched, sniffed the air, and again began to munch with its lips. Véretyeff promptly squatted down on his heels, like the hare, and began to twitch his nose, sniff, and munch like it. The hare passed its paws twice across its muzzle and shook itself,—they must have been wet with dew,—stiffened its ears, and bounded onward. Véretyeff rubbed his hands over his cheeks and shook him-

self also. . . . Márya Pávlovna could not hold out, and burst into a laugh.

"Bravo!"—cried Véretyeff, springing up. "Bravo! That 's exactly the point—you are not a coquette. Do you know, if any fashionable young lady had such teeth as you have she would laugh incessantly. But that 's precisely why I love you, Másha, because you are not a fashionable young lady, don't laugh without cause, and don't wear gloves on your hands, which it is a joy to kiss, because they are sunburned, and one feels their strength. . . . I love you, because you don't argue, because you are proud, taciturn, don't read books, don't love poetry . . . ."

"I 'll recite some verses to you, shall I?"—Márya Pávlovna interrupted him, with a certain peculiar expression on her face.

"Verses?"—inquired Véretyeff, in amazement.

"Yes, verses; the very ones which that Petersburg gentleman recited last night."

"'The Upas-Tree' again? . . . . So you really were declaiming in the garden, by night? That 's just like you. . . . But does it really please you so much?"

"Yes, it does."

"Recite it."

Márya Pávlovna was seized with shyness. . . .

"Recite it, recite it,"—repeated Véretyeff.

Márya Pávlovna began to recite; Véretyeff

stood in front of her, with his arms folded on his breast, and bent himself to listen. At the first line Márya Pávlovna raised her eyes heavenward; she did not wish to encounter Véretyeff's gaze. She recited in her even, soft voice, which reminded one of the sound of a violoncello; but when she reached the lines:

"And the poor slave expired at the feet
Of his invincible sovereign . . . ."

her voice began to quiver, her impassive, haughty brows rose ingenuously, like those of a little girl, and her eyes, with involuntary devotion, fixed themselves on Véretyeff. . . .

He suddenly threw himself at her feet and embraced her knees.

"I am thy slave!"—he cried.—"I am at thy feet, thou art my sovereign, my goddess, my ox-eyed Hera, my Medea . . . ."

Márya Pávlovna attempted to repulse him, but her hands sank helplessly in his thick curls, and, with a smile of confusion, she dropped her head on her breast. . . .

## V

Gavríla Stepánitch Akílin, at whose house the ball was appointed, belonged to the category of landed proprietors who evoked the admiration

of the neighbours by their ingenuity in living well on very insignificant means. Although he did not own more than four hundred serfs, he was in the habit of entertaining the whole government in a huge stone mansion, with a tower and a flag on the tower, erected by himself. The property had descended to him from his father, and had never been distinguished for being well ordered; Gavríla Stepánitch had been an absentee for a long time—had been in the service in Petersburg. At last, twenty-five years before the date of our story, he returned to his native place, with the rank of Collegiate Assessor,[1] and, with a wife and three daughters, had simultaneously undertaken reorganisation and building operations, had gradually set up an orchestra, and had begun to give dinners. At first everybody had prophesied for him speedy and inevitable ruin; more than once rumours had become current to the effect that Gavríla Stepánitch's estate was to be sold under the hammer; but the years passed, dinners, balls, banquets, concerts, followed each other in their customary order, new buildings sprang out of the earth like mushrooms, and still Gavríla Stepánitch's estate was not sold under the hammer, and he himself continued to live as before, and had even grown stout of late.

[1] The eighth (out of fourteen) in Peter the Great's Table of Ranks.—TRANSLATOR.

Then the neighbours' gossip took another direction; they began to hint at certain vast sums which were said to be concealed; they talked of a treasure. . . . "And if he were only a good farmer, . . . ." so argued the nobles among themselves; "but that 's just what he is n't, you know! Not at all! So it is deserving of surprise, and incomprehensible." However that may have been, every one went very gladly to Gavríla Stepánitch's house. He received his guests cordially, and played cards for any stake they liked. He was a grey-haired little man, with a small, pointed head, a yellow face, and yellow eyes, always carefully shaven and perfumed with eau-de-cologne; both on ordinary days and on holidays he wore a roomy blue dress-coat, buttoned to the chin, a large stock, in which he had a habit of hiding his chin, and he was foppishly fastidious about his linen; he screwed up his eyes and thrust out his lips when he took snuff, and spoke very politely and softly, incessantly employing the letter *s*.[1]

In appearance, Gavríla Stepánitch was not distinguished by vivacity, and, in general, his exterior was not prepossessing, and he did not look like a clever man, although, at times, craft gleamed in his eye. He had settled his two elder daughters advantageously; the youngest was

[1] "S'," a polite addition to sentences, equivalent to a contraction of the words for "sir" or "madam."—TRANSLATOR.

still at home, and of marriageable age. Gavríla Stepánitch also had a wife, an insignificant and wordless being.

At seven o'clock in the evening, Vladímir Sergyéitch presented himself at the Ipátoffs' in dress-suit and white gloves. He found them all entirely dressed; the little girls were sitting sedately, afraid of mussing their starched white frocks; old Ipátoff, on catching sight of Vladímir Sergyéitch in his dress-suit, affectionately upbraided him, and pointed to his own frock-coat; Márya Pávlovna wore a muslin gown of a deep rose colour, which was extremely becoming to her. Vladímir Sergyéitch paid her several compliments. Márya Pávlovna's beauty attracted him, although she was evidently shy of him; he also liked Nadézhda Alexyéevna, but her free-and-easy manners somewhat disconcerted him. Moreover, in her remarks, her looks, her very smiles, mockery frequently peeped forth, and this disturbed his citified and well-bred soul. He would not have been averse to making fun of others with her, but it was unpleasant to him to think that she was probably capable of jeering at himself.

The ball had already begun; a good many guests had assembled, and the home-bred orchestra was crashing and booming and screeching in the gallery, when the Ipátoff family, accompanied by Vladímir Sergyéitch, entered the hall of

the Akílin house. The host met them at the very door, thanked Vladímir Sergyéitch for his tender procuration of an agreeable surprise,—that was the way he expressed himself,—and, taking Ipátoff's arm, he led him to the drawing-room, to the card-tables. Gavríla Stepánitch had received a bad education, and everything in his house, both the music and the furniture and the food and the wines, not only could not be called first-class, but were not even fit to be ranked as second-class. On the other hand, there was plenty of everything, and he himself did not put on airs, was not arrogant . . . . the nobles demanded nothing more from him, and were entirely satisfied with his entertainment. At supper, for instance, the caviare was served cut up in chunks and heavily salted; but no one objected to your taking it in your fingers, and there was plenty wherewith to wash it down: wines which were cheap, it is true, but were made from grapes, nevertheless, and not some other concoction. The springs in Gavríla Stepánitch's furniture were rather uncomfortable, owing to their stiffness and inflexibility; but, not to mention the fact that there were no springs whatever in many of the couches and easy-chairs, any one could place under him a worsted cushion, and there was a great number of such cushions lying about, embroidered by the hands of Gavríla Stepánitch's spouse herself—and then there was nothing left to desire.

In a word, Gavríla Stepánitch's house could not possibly have been better adapted to the sociable and unceremonious style of ideas of the inhabitants of *** county, and it was solely owing to Mr. Akílin's modesty that at the assemblies of the nobility he was not elected Marshal, but a retired Major Podpékin, a greatly respected and worthy man, despite the fact that he brushed his hair over to the right temple from the left ear, dyed his moustache a lilac hue, and as he suffered from asthma, had of late fallen into melancholy.

So, then, the ball had already begun. They were dancing a quadrille of ten pairs. The cavaliers were the officers of a regiment stationed close by, and divers not very youthful squires, and two or three officials from the town. Everything was as it should be, everything was proceeding in due order. The Marshal of the Nobility was playing cards with a retired Actual Councillor of State,[1] and a wealthy gentleman, the owner of three thousand souls. The actual state councillor wore on his forefinger a ring with a diamond, talked very softly, kept the heels of his boots closely united, and did not move them from the position used by dancers of former days, and did not turn his head, which was half concealed by a capital velvet collar. The wealthy gentleman, on the contrary, was constantly laughing at something or other, elevating his eyebrows, and

[1] The fourth from the top in the Table of Ranks.—Translator.

flashing the whites of his eyes. The poet Bodryakóff, a man of shy and clumsy aspect, was chatting in a corner with the learned historian Evsiukóff: each had clutched the other by the button. Beside them, one noble, with a remarkably long waist, was expounding certain audacious opinions to another noble who was timidly staring at his forehead. Along the wall sat the mammas in gay-hued caps; around the doors pressed the men of simple cut, young fellows with perturbed faces, and elderly fellows with peaceable ones; but one cannot describe everything. We repeat: everything was as it should be.

Nadézhda Alexyéevna had arrived even earlier than the Ipátoffs; Vladímir Sergyéitch saw her dancing with a young man of handsome appearance in a dandified dress-suit, with expressive eyes, thin black moustache, and gleaming teeth; a gold chain hung in a semicircle on his stomach. Nadézhda Alexyéevna wore a light-blue gown with white flowers; a small garland of the same flowers encircled her curly head; she was smiling, fluttering her fan, and gaily gazing about her; she felt that she was the queen of the ball. Vladímir Sergyéitch approached her, made his obeisance, and looking her pleasantly in the face, he asked her whether she remembered her promise of the day before.

"What promise?"

" Why, that you would dance the mazurka with me."

" Yes, of course I will dance it with you."

The young man who stood alongside Nadézhda Alexyéevna suddenly flushed crimson.

"You have probably forgotten, mademoiselle," —he began,—" that you had already previously promised to-day's mazurka to me."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna became confused.

" Akh! good heavens, what am I to do? "—she said:—" excuse me, pray, M'sieu Steltchínsky, I am so absent-minded; I really am ashamed. . . ."

M'sieu Steltchínsky made no reply, and merely dropped his eyes; Vladímir Sergyéitch assumed a slight air of dignity.

" Be so good, M'sieu Steltchínsky,"—went on Nadézhda Alexyéevna; " you and I are old acquaintances, but M'sieu Astákhoff is a stranger among us; do not place me in an awkward position: permit me to dance with him."

" As you please,"—returned the young man.— " But you must begin."

" Thanks,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna, and fluttered off to meet her vis-à-vis.

Steltchínsky followed her with his eyes, then looked at Vladímir Sergyéitch. Vladímir Sergyéitch, in his turn, looked at him, then stepped aside.

The quadrille soon came to an end. Vladímir Sergyéitch strolled about the hall a little, then

he betook himself to the drawing-room and paused at one of the card-tables. Suddenly he felt some one touch his hand from behind; he turned round—before him stood Steltchínsky.

"I must have a couple of words with you in the next room, if you will permit,"—said the latter, in French, very courteously, and with an accent which was not Russian.

Vladímir Sergyéitch followed him.

Steltchínsky halted at a window.

"In the presence of ladies,"—he began, in the same language as before,—"I could not say anything else than what I did say; but I hope you do not think that I really intend to surrender to you my right to the mazurka with M-lle Véretyeff."

Vladímir Sergyéitch was astounded.

"Why so?"—he asked.

"Because, sir,"—replied Steltchínsky, quietly, laying his hand on his breast and inflating his nostrils,—"I don't intend to,—that 's all."

Vladímir Sergyéitch also laid his hand on his breast, but did not inflate his nostrils.

"Permit me to remark to you, my dear sir,"—he began,—"that by this course you may drag M-lle Véretyeff into unpleasantness, and I assume . . . ."

"That would be extremely unpleasant to me, but no one can prevent your declining, declaring that you are ill, or going away. . . ."

"I shall not do it. For whom do you take me?"

"In that case, I shall be compelled to demand satisfaction from you."

"In what sense do you mean . . . . satisfaction?"

"The sense is evident."

"You will challenge me to a duel?"

"Precisely so, sir, if you do not renounce the mazurka."

Steltchínsky endeavoured to utter these words as negligently as possible. Vladímir Sergyéitch's heart set to beating violently. He looked his wholly unexpected antagonist in the face. "Phew, O Lord, what stupidity!" he thought.

"You are not jesting?"—he articulated aloud.

"I am not in the habit of jesting in general,"—replied Steltchínsky, pompously;—"and particularly with people whom I do not know. You will not renounce the mazurka?"—he added, after a brief pause.

"I will not,"—retorted Vladímir Sergyéitch, as though deliberating.

"Very good! We will fight to-morrow."

"Very well."

"To-morrow morning my second will call upon you."

And with a courteous inclination, Steltchínsky withdrew, evidently well pleased with himself.

Vladímir Sergyéitch remained a few minutes longer by the window.

"Just look at that, now!"—he thought.—"This is the result of thy new acquaintances! What possessed me to come? Good! Splendid!"

But at last he recovered himself, and went out into the hall.

In the hall they were already dancing the polka. Before Vladímir Sergyéitch's eyes Márya Pávlovna flitted past with Piótr Alexyéitch, whom he had not noticed up to that moment; she seemed pale, and even sad; then Nadézhda Alexyéevna darted past, all beaming and joyous, with some youthful, bow-legged, but fiery artillery officer; on the second round, she was dancing with Steltchínsky. Steltchínsky shook his hair violently when he danced.

"Well, my dear fellow,"—suddenly rang out Ipátoff's voice behind Vladímir Sergyéitch's back;—"you 're only looking on, but not dancing yourself? Come, confess that, in spite of the fact that we live in a dead-calm region, so to speak, we are n't badly off, are we, hey?"

"Good! damn the dead-calm region!" thought Vladímir Sergyéitch, and mumbling something in reply to Ipátoff, he went off to another corner of the hall.

"I must hunt up a second,"—he pursued his meditations;—"but where the devil am I to find one? I can't take Véretyeff; I know no others;

the devil only knows what a stupid affair this is!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch, when he got angry, was fond of mentioning the devil.

At this moment, Vladímir Sergyéitch's eyes fell upon The Folding Soul, Iván Ílitch, standing idly by the window.

"Would n't he do?"—he thought, and shrugging his shoulders, he added almost aloud:—"I shall have to take him."

Vladímir Sergyéitch stepped up to him.

"A very strange thing has just happened to me,"—began our hero with a forced smile:—"just imagine some young man or other, a stranger to me, has challenged me to a duel; it is utterly impossible for me to refuse; I am in indispensable need of a second: will not you act?"

Although Iván Ílitch was characterised, as we know, by imperturbable indifference, yet such an unexpected proposition startled even him. Thoroughly perplexed, he riveted his eyes on Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Yes,"—repeated Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"I should be greatly indebted to you. I am not acquainted with any one here. You alone . . . ."

"I can't,"—said Iván Ílitch, as though just waking up;—"I absolutely can't."

"Why not? You are afraid of unpleasantness; but all this will, I hope, remain a secret. . . ."

As he spoke these words, Vladímir Sergyéitch felt himself blushing and growing confused.

"Excuse me, I can't possibly,"—repeated Iván Ílitch, shaking his head and drawing back, in which operation he again overturned a chair.

For the first time in his life it was his lot to reply to a request by a refusal; but then, the request was such a queer one!

"At any rate,"—pursued Vladímir Sergyéitch, in an agitated voice, as he grasped his hand,—"do me the favour not to speak to any one concerning what I have said to you. I earnestly entreat this of you."

"I can do that, I can do that,"—hastily replied Iván Ílitch;—"but the other thing I cannot do, say what you will; I positively am unable to do it."

"Well, very good, very good,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"but do not forget that I rely on your discretion. . . . I shall announce tomorrow to that gentleman," he muttered to himself with vexation,—"that I could not find a second, so let him make what arrangements he sees fit, for I am a stranger here. And the devil prompted me to apply to that gentleman! But what else was there for me to do?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch was very, very unlike his usual self.

In the meantime, the ball went on. Vladímir Sergyéitch would have greatly liked to de-

part at once, but departure was not to be thought of until the end of the mazurka. How was he to give up to his delighted antagonist? Unhappily for Vladímir Sergyéitch, the dances were in charge of a free-and-easy young gentleman with long hair and a sunken chest, over which, in semblance of a miniature waterfall, meandered a black satin neckcloth, transfixed with a huge gold pin. This young gentleman had the reputation, throughout the entire government, of being a man who had assimilated, in their most delicate details, all the customs and rules of the highest society, although he had lived in Petersburg only six months altogether, and had not succeeded in penetrating any loftier heights than the houses of Collegiate Assessor Sandaráki and his brother-in-law, State Councillor Kostandaráki. He superintended the dances at all balls, gave the signal to the musicians by clapping his hands, and in the midst of the roar of the trumpets and the squeaking of the violins shouted: "*En avant deux!*" or "*Grande chaîne!*" or "*A vous, mademoiselle!*" and was incessantly flying, all pale and perspiring, through the hall, slipping headlong, and bowing and scraping. He never began the mazurka before midnight. "And that is a concession,"—he was wont to say;—"in Petersburg I would keep you in torment until two o'clock."

This ball seemed very long to Vladímir Ser-

gyéitch. He prowled about like a shadow from hall to drawing-room, now and again exchanging cold glances with his antagonist, who never missed a single dance, and undertook to invite Márya Pávlovna for a quadrille, but she was already engaged—and a couple of times he bandied words with the anxious host, who appeared to be harassed by the tedium which was written on the countenance of the new guest. At last, the music of the longed-for mazurka thundered out. Vladímir Sergyéitch hunted up his lady, brought two chairs, and seated himself with her, near the end of the circle, almost opposite Steltchínsky.

The young man who managed affairs was in the first pair, as might have been expected. With what a face he began the mazurka, how he dragged his lady after him, how he beat the floor with his foot, and twitched his head the while,—all this is almost beyond the power of human pen to describe.

"But it seems to me, M'sieu Astákhoff, that you are bored,"—began Nadézhda Alexyéevna, suddenly turning to Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"I? Not in the least. What makes you think so?"

"Why, because I do from the expression of your face. . . . You have never smiled a single time since you arrived. I had not expected that of you. It is not becoming to you positive gen-

tlemen to be misanthropical and to frown à la Byron. Leave that to the authors."

"I notice, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, that you frequently call me a positive man, as though mockingly. It must be that you regard me as the coldest and most sensible of beings, incapable of anything which .... But do you know, I will tell you something; a positive man is often very sad at heart, but he does not consider it necessary to display to others what is going on there inside of him; he prefers to hold his peace."

"What do you mean by that?"—inquired Nadézhda Alexyéevna, surveying him with a glance.

"Nothing, ma'am,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch, with feigned indifference, assuming an air of mystery.

"Really?"

"Really, nothing. . . . You shall know some day, later on."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna wanted to pursue her questions, but at that moment a young girl, the host's daughter, led up to her Steltchínsky and another cavalier in blue spectacles.

"Life or death?"—she asked in French.

"Life,"—exclaimed Nadézhda Alexyéevna; "I don't want death just yet."

Steltchínsky bowed; she went off with him.[1]

[1] The figures in the mazurka are like those in the cotillon (which is often danced the same evening), but the step is very animated and original.—Translator.

The cavalier in the blue glasses, who was called Death, started off with the host's daughter. Steltchínsky had invented the two designations.

"Tell me, please, who is that Mr. Steltchínsky?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch of Nadézhda Alexyéevna, as soon as the latter returned to her place.

"He is attached to the Governor's service, and is a very agreeable man. He does not belong in these parts. He is somewhat of a coxcomb, but that runs in the blood of all of them. I hope you have not had any explanations with him on account of the mazurka?"

"None whatever, I assure you,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch, with a little hesitation.

"I 'm such a forgetful creature! You can't imagine!"

"I am bound to be delighted with your forgetfulness: it has afforded me the pleasure of dancing with you to-night."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna gazed at him, with her eyes slightly narrowed.

"Really? You find it agreeable to dance with me?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch answered her with a compliment. Little by little he got to talking freely. Nadézhda Alexyéevna was always charming, and particularly so that evening; Vladímir Sergyéitch thought her enchanting. The thought of the duel on the morrow, while it fretted his nerves,

imparted brilliancy and vivacity to his remarks; under its influence he permitted himself slight exaggerations in the expression of his feelings. . . . "I don't care!" he thought. Something mysterious, involuntarily sad, something elegantly-hopeless peeped forth in all his words, in his suppressed sighs, in his glances which suddenly darkened. At last, he got to chattering to such a degree that he began to discuss love, women, his future, the manner in which he conceived of happiness, what he demanded of Fate. . . . He explained himself allegorically, by hints. On the eve of his possible death, Vladímir Sergyéitch flirted with Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

She listened to him attentively, laughed, shook her head, now disputed with him, again pretended to be incredulous. . . . The conversation, frequently interrupted by the approach of ladies and cavaliers, took a rather strange turn toward the end. . . . Vladímir Sergyéitch had already begun to interrogate Nadézhda Alexyéevna about herself, her character, her sympathies. At first she parried the questions with a jest, then, suddenly, and quite unexpectedly to Vladímir Sergyéitch, she asked him when he was going away.

"Whither?"—he said, in surprise.

"To your own home."

"To Sásovo?"

"No, home, to your village, a hundred versts from here."

Vladímir Sergyéitch cast down his eyes.

"I should like to go as promptly as possible," —he said with a preoccupied look on his face.— "To-morrow, I think . . . . if I am alive. For I have business on hand. But why have you suddenly taken it into your head to ask me about that?"

"Because I have!"—retorted Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"But what is the reason?"

"Because I have!"—she repeated.—"I am surprised at the curiosity of a man who is going away to-morrow, and to-day wants to find out about my character. . . ."

"But, pardon me . . . ." began Vladímir Sergyéitch. . . .

"Ah, here, by the way . . . . read this,"—Nadézhda Alexyéevna interrupted him with a laugh, as she handed him a motto-slip of paper from bonbons which she had just taken from a small table that stood near by, as she rose to meet Márya Pávlovna, who had stopped in front of her with another lady.

Márya Pávlovna was dancing with Piótr Alexyéitch. Her face was covered with a flush, and was flaming, but not cheerful.

Vladímir Sergyéitch glanced at the slip of paper; thereon, in wretched French letters, was printed:

"*Qui me néglige me perd.*"

He raised his eyes, and encountered Steltchínsky's gaze bent upon him. Vladímir Sergyéitch smiled constrainedly, threw his elbow over the back of the chair, and crossed his legs—as much as to say: "I don't care for thee!"

The fiery artillery officer brought Nadézhda Alexyéevna up to her chair with a dash, pirouetted gently in front of her, bowed, clicked his spurs, and departed. She sat down.

"Allow me to inquire,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch, with pauses between his words,—"in what sense I am to understand this billet? . . . ."

"But what in the world does it say?"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna.—"Ah, yes! '*Qui me néglige me perd.*' Well! that 's an admirable rule of life, which may be of service at every step. In order to make a success of anything, no matter what, one must not neglect anything whatsoever. . . . One must endeavour to obtain everything; perhaps one will obtain something. But I am ridiculous. I . . . . I am talking to you, a practical man, about rules of life. . . ."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna burst into a laugh, and Vladímir Sergyéitch strove, in vain, to the very end of the mazurka, to renew their previous conversation. Nadézhda Alexyéevna avoided it with the perversity of a capricious child. Vladímir Sergyéitch talked to her about his sentiments, and she either did not reply to him at all, or else she called his attention to the gowns of the ladies,

to the ridiculous faces of some of the men, to the skill with which her brother danced, to the beauty of Márya Pávlovna; she began to talk about music, about the day before, about Egór Kapítonitch and his wife, Matryóna Márkovna . . . . and only at the very close of the mazurka, when Vladímir Sergyéitch was beginning to make her his farewell bow, did she say, with an ironical smile on her lips and in her eyes:

"So you are positively going to-morrow?"

"Yes; and very far away, perhaps,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, significantly.

"I wish you a happy journey."

And Nadézhda Alexyéevna swiftly approached her brother, merrily whispered something in his ear, then asked aloud:

"Grateful to me? Yes? art thou not? otherwise he would have asked *her* for the mazurka."

He shrugged his shoulders, and said:

"Nevertheless, nothing will come of it. . . ."

She led him off into the drawing-room.

"The flirt!"—thought Vladímir Sergyéitch, and taking his hat in his hand, he slipped unnoticed from the hall, hunted up his footman, to whom he had previously given orders to hold himself in readiness, and was already donning his overcoat, when suddenly, to his intense surprise, the lackey informed him that it was impossible to depart, as the coachman, in some unknown manner, had drunk to intoxication,

and that it was utterly impossible to arouse him. After cursing the coachman in a remarkably brief but extremely powerful manner (this took place in the anteroom, outside witnesses were present), and informing his footman that if the coachman was not in proper condition by daylight to-morrow, then no one in the world would be capable of picturing to himself what the result would be, Vladímir Sergyéitch returned to the hall, and requested the major-domo to allot him a chamber, without waiting for supper, which was already prepared in the drawing-room. The master of the house suddenly popped up, as it were, out of the floor, at Vladímir Sergyéitch's very elbow (Gavríla Stepánitch wore boots without heels, and therefore moved about without the slightest sound), and began to hold him back, assuring him that there would be caviar of the very best quality for supper; but Vladímir Sergyéitch excused himself on the plea of a headache. Half an hour later he was lying in a small bed, under a short coverlet, and trying to get to sleep.

But he could not get to sleep. Toss as he would from side to side, strive as he would to think of something else, the figure of Steltchínsky importunately towered up before him. . . . Now he is taking aim . . . now he has fired. . . . . "Astákhoff is killed," says some one. Vladímir Sergyéitch could not be called a brave

man, yet he was no coward; but even the thought of a duel, no matter with whom, had never once entered his head. . . . Fight! with his good sense, peaceable disposition, respect for the conventions, dreams of future prosperity, and an advantageous marriage! If it had not been a question of his own person, he would have laughed heartily, so stupid and ridiculous did this affair seem to him. Fight! with whom, and about what? !

"Phew! damn it! what nonsense!"—he exclaimed involuntarily aloud.—"Well, and what if he really does kill me?"—he continued his meditations;—"I must take measures, make arrangements. . . . Who will mourn for me?"

And in vexation he closed his eyes, which were staringly-wide open, drew the coverlet up around his neck . . . . but could not get to sleep, nevertheless. . . .

Dawn was already breaking, and exhausted with the fever of insomnia, Vladímir Sergyéitch was beginning to fall into a doze, when suddenly he felt some weight or other on his feet. He opened his eyes. . . . On his bed sat Véretyeff.

Vladímir Sergyéitch was greatly amazed, especially when he noticed that Véretyeff had no coat on, that beneath his unbuttoned shirt his bare breast was visible, that his hair was tumbling over his forehead, and that his very face

appeared changed. Vladímir Sergyéitch got half-way out of bed. . . .

"Allow me to ask . . . ." he began, throwing his hands apart. . . .

"I have come to you,"—said Véretyeff, in a hoarse voice;—"excuse me for coming in such a guise. . . . We have been drinking a bit yonder. I wanted to put you at ease. I said to myself: 'Yonder lies a gentleman who, in all probability, cannot get to sleep.—Let 's help him.'—Understand; you are not going to fight to-morrow, and can go to sleep. . . . ."

Vladímir Sergyéitch was still more amazed than before.

"What was that you said?"—he muttered.

"Yes; that has all been adjusted,"—went on Véretyeff;—"that gentleman from the banks of the Visla . . . . Steltchínsky . . . . makes his apologies to you . . . . to-morrow you will receive a letter. . . . I repeat to you:—all is settled. . . . Snore away."

So saying, Véretyeff rose, and directed his course, with unsteady steps, toward the door.

"But permit me, permit me,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"How could you have found out, and how can I believe . . . ."

"Akh! you think that I . . . . you know . . . ." (and he reeled forward slightly) . . . . "I tell you . . . he will send a letter to you to-morrow. . . . . You do not arouse any particular sym-

pathy in me, but magnanimity is my weak side. But what 's the use of talking. . . . It 's all nonsense anyway. . . . But confess,"—he added, with a wink;—" you were pretty well scared, were n't you, hey? "

Vladímir Sergyéitch flew into a rage.

" Permit me, in conclusion, my dear sir,"—said he. . . .

" Well, good, good,"—Véretyeff interrupted him with a good-natured smile.—" Don't fly into a passion. Evidently you are not aware that no ball ever takes place without that sort of thing. That 's the established rule. It never amounts to anything. Who feels like exposing his brow? Well, and why not bluster, hey? at newcomers, for instance? *In vino veritas.* However, neither you nor I know Latin. But I see by your face that you are sleepy. I wish you good night, Mr. Positive Man, well-intentioned mortal. Accept this wish from another mortal who is n't worth a brass farthing himself. *Addio, mio caro!* "

And Véretyeff left the room.

" The devil knows what this means! "—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch, after a brief pause, banging his fist into the pillow;—" no one ever heard the like! . . . this must be cleared up! I won't tolerate this! "

Nevertheless, five minutes later he was already sleeping softly and profoundly. . . . Danger

escaped fills the soul of man with sweetness, and softens it.

This is what had taken place before that unanticipated nocturnal interview between Véretyeff and Vladímir Sergyéitch.

In Gavríla Stepánitch's house lived his grandnephew, who occupied bachelor quarters in the lower story. When there were balls on hand, the young men dropped in at his rooms between the dances, to smoke a hasty pipe, and after supper they assembled there for a friendly drinking-bout. A good many of the guests had dropped in on him that night. Steltchínsky and Véretyeff were among the number; Iván Ílitch, The Folding Soul, also wandered in there in the wake of the others. They brewed a punch. Although Iván Ílitch had promised Astákhoff that he would not mention the impending duel to any one whomsoever, yet, when Véretyeff accidentally asked him what he had been talking about with that glum fellow (Véretyeff never alluded to Astákhoff otherwise), The Folding Soul could not contain himself, and repeated his entire conversation with Vladímir Sergyéitch, word for word.

Véretyeff burst out laughing, then lapsed into meditation.

"But with whom is he going to fight?"—he asked.

"That 's what I cannot say,"—returned Iván Ílitch.

"At all events, with whom has he been talking?"

"With different people. . . . With Egór Kapítonitch. It cannot be that he is going to fight with him?"

Véretyeff went away from Iván Ílitch.

So, then, they made a punch, and began to drink. Véretyeff was sitting in the most conspicuous place. Jolly and profligate, he held the pre-eminence in gatherings of young men. He threw off his waistcoat and neckcloth. He was asked to sing; he took a guitar and sang several songs. Heads began to wax rather hot; the young men began to propose toasts. Suddenly Steltchínsky, all red in the face, sprang upon the table, and elevating his glass high above his head, exclaimed loudly:

"To the health . . . . of I know whom,"—he hastily caught himself up, drank off his liquor, and smashed his glass on the floor, adding:—"May my foe be shivered into just such pieces to-morrow!"

Véretyeff, who had long had his eye on him, swiftly raised his head. . . .

"Steltchínsky,"—said he,—"in the first place, get off the table; that 's indecorous, and you have very bad boots into the bargain; and, in the second place, come hither, I will tell thee something."

He led him aside.

"Hearken, brother; I know that thou art going to fight to-morrow with that gentleman from Petersburg."

Steltchínsky started.

"How . . . . who told thee?"

"I tell thee it is so. And I also know on whose account thou art going to fight."

"Who is it? I am curious to know."

"Akh, get out with thee, thou Talleyrand! My sister's, of course. Come, come, don't pretend to be surprised. It gives you a goose-like expression. I can't imagine how this has come about, but it is a fact. That will do, my good fellow,"—pursued Véretyeff.—"What 's the use of shamming? I know, you see, that you have been paying court to her this long time."

"But, nevertheless, that does not prove . . . ."

"Stop, if you please. But hearken to what I am about to say to you. I won't permit that duel under any circumstances whatsoever. Dost understand? All this folly will descend upon my sister. Excuse me: so long as I am alive . . . . that shall not be. As for thou and I, we shall perish—we 're on the road to it; but she must live a long time yet, and live happily. Yes, I swear,"—he added, with sudden heat,—"that I will betray all others, even those who might be ready to sacrifice everything for me, but I will

not permit any one to touch a single hair of her head."

Steltchínsky emitted a forced laugh.

"Thou art drunk, my dear fellow, and art raving . . . . that 's all."

"And art not thou, I 'd like to know? But whether I am drunk or not, is a matter of not the slightest consequence. But I 'm talking business. Thou shalt not fight with that gentleman, I guarantee that. And what in the world possessed thee to have anything to do with him? Hast grown jealous, pray? Well, those speak the truth who say that men in love are stupid! Why she danced with him simply in order to prevent his inviting . . . . Well, but that 's not the point. But this duel shall not take place."

"H'm! I should like to see how thou wilt prevent me?"

"Well, then, this way: if thou dost not instantly give me thy word to renounce this duel, I will fight with thee myself."

"Really?"

"My dear fellow, entertain no doubt on that score. I will insult thee on the spot, my little friend, in the presence of every one, in the most fantastic manner, and then fight thee across a handkerchief, if thou wilt. But I think that will be disagreeable to thee, for many reasons, hey?"

Steltchínsky flared up, began to say that this

was *intimidation*,[1] that he would not permit any one to meddle with his affairs, that he would not stick at anything . . . . and wound up by submitting, and renouncing all attempts on the life of Vladímir Sergyéitch. Véretyeff embraced him, and half an hour had not elapsed, before the two had already drunk Brüderschaft for the tenth time,—that is to say, they drank with arms interlocked. . . . The young man who had acted as floor-manager of the ball also drank Brüderschaft with them, and at first clung close to them, but finally fell asleep in the most innocent manner, and lay for a long time on his back in a condition of complete insensibility. . . . The expression of his tiny, pale face was both amusing and pitiful. . . . Good heavens! what would those fashionable ladies, his acquaintances, have said, if they had beheld him in that condition! But, luckily for him, he was not acquainted with a single fashionable lady.

Iván Ílitch also distinguished himself on that night. First he amazed the guests by suddenly striking up: "In the country a Baron once dwelt."

"The hawfinch! The hawfinch has begun to sing!"—shouted all. "When has it ever happened that a hawfinch has sung by night?"

"As though I knew only one song,"—retorted

[1] He uses an impromptu Russification of a foreign word: *intimidátziya*.—TRANSLATOR.

Iván Ílitch, who was heated with liquor;—"I know some more, too."

"Come, come, come, show us your art."

Iván Ílitch maintained silence for a while, and suddenly struck up in a bass voice: "Krambambuli,[1] bequest of our fathers!" but so incoherently and strangely, that a general outburst of laughter immediately drowned his voice, and he fell silent. When all had dispersed, Véretyeff betook himself to Vladímir Sergyéitch, and the brief conversation already reported, ensued between them.

On the following day, Vladímir Sergyéitch drove off to his own Sásovo very early. He passed the whole morning in a state of excitement, came near mistaking a passing merchant for a second, and breathed freely only when his lackey brought him a letter from Steltchínsky. Vladímir Sergyéitch perused that letter several times,—it was very adroitly worded. . . . Steltchínsky began with the words: *"La nuit porte conseil, Monsieur,"*—made no excuses whatever, because, in his opinion, he had not insulted his antagonist in any way; but admitted that he had been somewhat irritated on the preceding evening, and wound up with the statement that he held himself entirely at the disposition of Mr. Astákhoff (*"de M-r Astákhoff"*), but no longer demanded satisfaction himself. After having

[1] A mixed drink.—Translator.

composed and despatched a reply, which was filled, simultaneously with courtesy which bordered on playfulness, and a sense of dignity, in which, however, no trace of braggadocio was perceptible, Vladímir Sergyéitch sat down to dinner, rubbing his hands, ate with great satisfaction, and immediately afterward set off, without having even sent relays on in advance. The road along which he drove passed at a distance of four versts from Ipátoff's manor. . . . Vladímir Sergyéitch looked at it.

"Farewell, region of dead calm!"—he said with a smile.

The images of Nadézhda Alexyéevna and Márya Pávlovna presented themselves for a moment to his imagination; he dismissed them with a wave of his hand, and sank into a doze.

## VI

More than three months had passed. Autumn had long since set in; the yellow forests had grown bare, the tomtits had arrived, and—unfailing sign of the near approach of winter—the wind had begun to howl and wail. But there had been no heavy rains, as yet, and mud had not succeeded in spreading itself over the roads. Taking advantage of this circumstance, Vladímir Sergyéitch set out for the government capital,

for the purpose of winding up several matters of business. He spent the morning in driving about, and in the evening went to the club. In the vast, gloomy hall of the club he encountered several acquaintances, and, among others, the old retired captain of cavalry Flitch, a busybody, wit, gambler, and gossip, well known to every one. Vladímir Sergyéitch entered into conversation with him.

"Ah, by the way!"—suddenly exclaimed the retired cavalry-captain; "an acquaintance of yours passed through here the other day, and left her compliments for you."

"Who was she?"

"Madame Steltchínsky."

"I don't know any Madame Steltchínsky."

"You knew her as a girl. . . . She was born Véretyeff. . . . Nadézhda Alexyéevna. Her husband served our Governor. You must have seen him also. . . . A lively man, with a moustache. . . . He 's hooked a splendid woman, with money to boot."

"You don't say so,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"So she has married him. . . . H'm! And where have they gone?"

"To Petersburg. She also bade me remind you of a certain bonbon motto. . . . What sort of a motto was it, allow me to inquire?"

And the old gossip thrust forward his sharp nose.

" I don't remember, really; some jest or other," —returned Vladímir Sergyéitch.—" But permit me to ask, where is her brother now? "

" Piótr? Well, he 's in a bad way."

Mr. Flitch rolled up his small, foxy eyes, and heaved a sigh.

" Why, what 's the matter? "—asked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

" He has taken to dissipation! He 's a ruined man."

" But where is he now? "

" It is absolutely unknown where he is. He went off somewhere or other after a gipsy girl; that 's the most certain thing of all. He 's not in this government, I 'll guarantee that."

" And does old Ipátoff still live there? "

" Mikhaíl Nikoláitch? That eccentric old fellow? Yes, he still lives there."

" And is everything in his household . . . . as it used to be? "

" Certainly, certainly. Here now, why don't you marry his sister-in-law? She 's not a woman, you know, she 's simply a monument, really. Ha, ha! People have already been talking among us . . . . ' why,' say they . . . ."

" You don't say so, sir,"—articulated Vladímir Sergyéitch, narrowing his eyes.

At that moment, Flitch was invited to a card-game, and the conversation terminated.

Vladímir Sergyéitch had intended to return

home promptly; but suddenly he received by special messenger a report from the overseer, that six of the peasants' homesteads had burned down in Sásovo, and he decided to go thither himself. The distance from the government capital to Sásovo was reckoned at sixty versts. Vladímir Sergyéitch arrived toward evening at the wing with which the reader is already acquainted, immediately gave orders that the overseer and clerk should be summoned, scolded them both in proper fashion, inspected the scene of the conflagration next morning, took the necessary measures, and after dinner, after some wavering, set off to visit Ipátoff. Vladímir Sergyéitch would have remained at home, had he not heard from Flitch of Nadézhda Alexyéevna's departure; he did not wish to meet her; but he was not averse to taking another look at Márya Pávlovna.

Vladímir Sergyéitch, as on the occasion of his first visit, found Ipátoff busy at draughts with The Folding Soul. The old man was delighted to see him; yet it seemed to Vladímir Sergyéitch as though his face were troubled, and his speech did not flow freely and readily as of old.

Vladímir Sergyéitch exchanged a silent glance with Iván Ílitch. Both winced a little; but they speedily recovered their serenity.

"Are all your family well?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Yes, thank God, I thank you sincerely,"—

replied Ipátoff.—"Only Márya Pávlovna is n't quite . . . you know, she stays in her room most of the time."

"Has she caught cold?"

"No . . . she just likes to. She will make her appearance at tea."

"And Egór Kapítonitch? What is he doing?"

"Akh! Egór Kapítonitch is a dead man. His wife has died."

"It cannot be!"

"She died in twenty-four hours, of cholera. You would n't know him now, he has become simply unrecognisable. 'Without Matryóna Márkovna,' he says, 'life is a burden to me. I shall die,' he says, 'and God be thanked,' he says; 'I don't wish to live,' says he. Yes, he 's done for, poor fellow."

"Akh! good heavens, how unpleasant that is!"—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"Poor Egór Kapítonitch!"

All were silent for a time.

"I hear that your pretty neighbour has married,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch, flushing faintly.

"Nadézhda Alexyéevna? Yes, she has."

Ipátoff darted a sidelong glance at Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Certainly . . . . certainly, she has married and gone away."

"To Petersburg?"

"To St. Petersburg."

"Márya Pávlovna must miss her, I think. I believe they were great friends."

"Of course she misses her. That cannot be avoided. But as for friendship, I 'll just tell you, that the friendship of girls is even worse than the friendship of men. So long as they are face to face, it 's all right; but, otherwise, it vanishes."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, by Heaven, 't is so! Take Nadézhda Alexyéevna, for example. She has n't written to us since she went away; but how she promised, even vowed that she would! In truth, she 's in no mood for that now."

"And has she been gone long?"

"Yes; it must be fully six weeks. She hurried off on the very day after the wedding, foreign fashion."

"I hear that her brother is no longer here, either?"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, after a brief pause.

"No; he is not. They are city folk, you see; as though they would live long in the country!"

"And does no one know where he has gone?"

"No."

"He just went into a rage, and—slap-bang on the ear," remarked Iván Ílitch.

"He just went into a rage, and—slap-bang on the ear," repeated Ipátoff. "Well, and how about

yourself, Vladímir Sergyéitch,—what nice things have you been doing?"—he added, wheeling round on his chair.

Vladímir Sergyéitch began to tell about himself; Ipátoff listened and listened to him, and at last exclaimed:

"But why does n't Márya Pávlovna come? Thou hadst better go for her, Iván Ílitch."

Iván Ílitch left the room, and returning, reported that Márya Pávlovna would be there directly.

"What 's the matter? Has she got a headache?"—inquired Ipátoff, in an undertone.

"Yes," replied Iván Ílitch.

The door opened, and Márya Pávlovna entered. Vladímir Sergyéitch rose, bowed, and could not utter a word, so great was his amazement: so changed was Márya Pávlovna since he had seen her the last time! The rosy bloom had vanished from her emaciated cheeks; a broad black ring encircled her eyes; her lips were bitterly compressed; her whole face, impassive and dark, seemed to have become petrified.

She raised her eyes, and there was no spark in them.

"How do you feel now?" Ipátoff asked her.

"I am well,"—she replied; and sat down at the table, on which the samovár was already bubbling.

Vladímir Sergyéitch was pretty thoroughly bored that evening. But no one was in good spirits. The conversation persisted in taking a cheerless turn.

"Just listen,"—said Ipátoff, among other things, as he lent an ear to the howling of the wind;—"what notes it emits! The summer is long since past; and here is autumn passing, too, and winter is at the door. Again we shall be buried in snow-drifts. I hope the snow will fall very soon. Otherwise, when you go out into the garden, melancholy descends upon you. . . . Just as though there were some sort of a ruin there. The branches of the trees clash together. . . . Yes, the fine days are over!"

"They are over,"—repeated Iván Ílitch.

Márya Pávlovna stared silently out of the window.

"God willing, they will return,"—remarked Ipátoff.

No one answered him.

"Do you remember how finely they sang songs here that time?"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"I should think they did,"—replied the old man, with a sigh.

"But you might sing to us,"—went on Vladímir Sergyéitch, turning to Márya Pávlovna;—"you have such a fine voice."

She did not answer him.

"And how is your mother?"—Vladímir Ser-

gyéitch inquired of Ipátoff, not knowing what to talk about.

"Thank God! she gets on nicely, considering her ailments. She came over in her little carriage to-day. She 's a broken tree, I must tell you—creak, creak, and the first you know, some young, strong sapling falls over; but she goes on standing and standing. Ekh, ha, ha!"

Márya Pávlovna dropped her hands in her lap, and bowed her head.

"And, nevertheless, her existence is hard,"—began Ipátoff again;—"rightly is it said: 'old age is no joy.'"

"And there 's no joy in being young,"—said Márya Pávlovna, as though to herself.

Vladímir Sergyéitch would have liked to return home that night, but it was so dark out of doors that he could not make up his mind to set out. He was assigned to the same chamber, up-stairs, in which, three months previously, he had passed a troubled night, thanks to Egór Kapítonitch. . . .

"Does he snore now?"—thought Vladímir Sergyéitch, as he recalled his drilling of his servant, and the sudden appearance of Márya Pávlovna in the garden. . . .

Vladímir Sergyéitch walked to the window, and laid his brow against the cold glass. His own face gazed dimly at him from out of doors, as though his eyes were rivcted upon a black cur-

tain, and it was only after a considerable time that he was able to make out against the starless sky the branches of the trees, writhing wildly in the gloom. They were harassed by a turbulent wind.

Suddenly it seemed to Vladímir Sergyéitch as though something white had flashed along the ground. . . . He gazed more intently, laughed, shrugged his shoulders, and exclaiming in an undertone: "That 's what imagination will do!" got into bed.

He fell asleep very soon; but he was not fated to pass a quiet night on this occasion either. He was awakened by a running to and fro, which arose in the house. . . . He raised his head from the pillow. . . . Agitated voices, exclamations, hurried footsteps were audible, doors were banging; now the sound of women weeping rang out, shouts were set up in the garden, other cries farther off responded. . . . The uproar in the house increased, and became more noisy with every moment. . . . "Fire!" flashed through Vladímir Sergyéitch's mind. In alarm he sprang from his bed, and rushed to the window; but there was no redness in the sky; only, in the garden, points of flame were moving briskly along the paths,—caused by people running about with lanterns. Vladímir Sergyéitch went quickly to the door, opened it, and ran directly into Iván Ílitch. Pale, dishevelled, half-clothed, the lat-

ter was dashing onward, without himself knowing whither.

"What is it? What has happened?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch, excitedly, seizing him by the arm.

"She has disappeared; she has thrown herself into the water,"—replied Iván Ílitch, in a choking voice.

"Who has thrown herself into the water? Who has disappeared?"

"Márya Pávlovna! Who else could it be but Márya Pávlovna? She has perished, the darling! Help! Good heavens, let us run as fast as we can! Be quick, my dear people!"

And Iván Ílitch rushed down the stairs.

Vladímir Sergyéitch put on his shoes somehow, threw his cloak over his shoulders, and ran after him.

In the house he no longer encountered any one, all had hastened out into the garden; only the little girls, Ipátoff's daughters, met him in the corridor, near the anteroom; deadly pale with terror, they stood there in their little white petticoats, with clasped hands and bare feet, beside a night-lamp set on the floor. Through the drawing-room, past an overturned table, flew Vladímir Sergyéitch to the terrace. Through the grove, in the direction of the dam, light and shadows were flashing. . . .

"Go for boat-hooks! Go for boat-hooks as

quickly as possible!"—Ipátoff's voice could be heard shouting.

"A net, a net, a boat!"—shouted other voices.

Vladímir Sergyéitch ran in the direction of the shouts. He found Ipátoff on the shore of the pond; a lantern hung on a bough brilliantly illuminated the old man's grey head. He was wringing his hands, and reeling like a drunken man; by his side, a woman lay writhing and sobbing on the grass; round about men were bustling. Iván Ílitch had already advanced into the water up to his knees, and was feeling the bottom with a pole; a coachman was undressing, trembling all over as he did so; two men were dragging a boat along the shore; a sharp trampling of hoofs was audible along the village street. . . . The wind swept past with a shriek, as though endeavouring to quench the lantern, while the pond plashed noisily, darkling in a menacing way. . . .

"What do I hear?"—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch, rushing up to Ipátoff.—"Is it possible?"

"The boat-hooks—fetch the boat-hooks!"—moaned the old man by way of reply to him. . . .

"But good gracious, perhaps you are mistaken, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch. . . ."

"No, mistaken indeed!"—said the woman who was lying on the grass, Márya Pávlovna's maid, in a tearful voice. "Unlucky creature that I am, I heard her myself, the darling, throw herself into the water, and struggling in the water,

and screaming: 'Save me!' and then, once more: 'Save me!'"

"Why did n't you prevent her, pray?"

"But how was I to prevent her, dear little father, my lord? Why, when I discovered it, she was no longer in her room, but my heart had a foreboding, you know; these last days she has been so sad all the time, and has said nothing; so I knew how it was, and rushed straight into the garden, just as though some one had made me do it; and suddenly I heard something go splash! into the water: 'Save me!' I heard the cry: 'Save me!' . . . . Okh, my darling, light of my eyes!"

"But perhaps it only seemed so to thee!"

"Seemed so, forsooth! But where is she? what has become of her?"

"So that is what looked white to me in the gloom," thought Vladímir Sergyéitch. . . .

In the meanwhile, men had run up with boat-hooks, dragged thither a net, and begun to spread it out on the grass, a great throng of people had assembled, a commotion had arisen, and a jostling . . . . the coachman seized one boat-hook, the village elder seized another, both sprang into the boat, put off, and set to searching the water with the hooks; the people on the shore lighted them. Strange and dreadful did their movements seem, and their shadows in the gloom, above the agitated pond, in the dim and uncertain light of the lanterns.

"He . . . here, the hook has caught!"—suddenly cried the coachman.

All stood stock-still where they were.

The coachman pulled the hook toward him, and bent over. . . . Something horned and black slowly came to the surface. . . .

"A tree-stump,"—said the coachman, pulling away the hook.

"But come back, come back!"—they shouted to him from the shore.—"Thou wilt accomplish nothing with the hooks; thou must use the net."

"Yes, yes, the net!"—chimed in others.

"Stop,"—said the elder;—"I 've got hold of something also . . . . something soft, apparently,"—he added, after a brief pause.

A white spot made its appearance alongside the boat. . . .

"The young lady!"—suddenly shouted the elder.—"'T is she!"

He was not mistaken. . . . The hook had caught Márya Pávlovna by the sleeve of her gown. The coachman immediately seized her, dragged her out of the water . . . . in a couple of powerful strokes the boat was at the shore. . . . . Ipátoff, Iván Ílitch, Vladímir Sergyéitch, all rushed to Márya Pávlovna, raised her up, bore her home in their arms, immediately undressed her, and began to roll her, and warm her. . . . . But all their efforts, their exertions,

proved vain. . . . Márya Pávlovna did not come to herself. . . . Life had already left her.

Early on the following morning, Vladímir Sergyéitch left Ipátovka; before his departure, he went to bid farewell to the dead woman. She was lying on the table in the drawing-room in a white gown. . . . Her thick hair was not yet entirely dry, a sort of mournful surprise was expressed on her pale face, which had not had time to grow distorted; her parted lips seemed to be trying to speak, and ask something; . . . her hands, convulsively clasped, as though with grief, were pressed tight to her breast. . . . But with whatever sorrowful thought the poor drowned girl had perished, death had laid upon her the seal of its eternal silence and peace . . . . and who understands what a dead face expresses during those few moments when, for the last time, it meets the glance of the living before it vanishes forever and is destroyed in the grave?

Vladímir Sergyéitch stood for a while in decorous meditation before the body of Márya Pávlovna, crossed himself thrice, and left the room, without having noticed Iván Ílitch who was weeping softly in one corner. . . . And he was not the only one who wept that day: all the servants in the house wept bitterly: Márya Pávlovna had left a good memory behind her.

The following is what old Ipátoff wrote, a

week later, in reply to a letter which had come, at last, from Nadézhda Alexyéevna:

"One week ago, dear Madam, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, my unhappy sister-in-law, your acquaintance, Márya Pávlovna, wilfully ended her own life, by throwing herself by night into the pond, and we have already committed her body to the earth. She decided upon this sad and terrible deed, without having bidden me farewell, without leaving even a letter or so much as a note, to declare her last will. . . . But you know better than any one else, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, on whose soul this great and deadly sin must fall! May the Lord God judge your brother, for my sister-in-law could not cease to love him, nor survive the separation. . . ."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna received this letter in Italy, whither she had gone with her husband, Count de Steltchínsky, as he was called in all the hotels. He did not visit hotels alone, however; he was frequently seen in gambling-houses, in the Kur-Saal at the baths. . . . At first he lost a great deal of money, then he ceased to lose, and his face assumed a peculiar expression, not precisely suspicious, nor yet precisely insolent, like that which a man has who unexpectedly gets involved in scandals. . . . He saw his wife rarely. But Nadézhda Alexyéevna did not languish in his absence. She developed a passion for painting and the fine arts. She associated chiefly with artists, and was fond of discussing the beautiful

with young men. Ipátoff's letter grieved her greatly, but did not prevent her going that same day to "the Dogs' Cave," to see how the poor animals suffocated when immersed in sulphur fumes.

She did not go alone. She was escorted by divers cavaliers. Among their number, a certain Mr. Popelin, an artist—a Frenchman, who had not finished his course—with a small beard, and dressed in a checked sack-coat, was the most agreeable. He sang the newest romances in a thin tenor voice, made very free-and-easy jokes, and although he was gaunt of form, yet he ate a very great deal.

## VII

It was a sunny, cold January day; a multitude of people were strolling on the Névsky Prospékt. The clock on the tower of the city hall marked three o'clock. Along the broad stone slabs, strewn with yellow sand, was walking, among others, our acquaintance Vladímir Sergyéitch Astákhoff. He has grown very virile since we parted from him; his face is framed in whiskers, and he has grown plump all over, but he has not aged. He was moving after the crowd at a leisurely pace, and now and then casting a glance about him; he was expecting his

wife; she had preferred to drive up in the carriage with her mother. Vladímir Sergyéitch married five years ago, precisely in the manner which he had always desired: his wife was wealthy, and with the best of connections. Courteously lifting his splendidly brushed hat when he met his numerous acquaintances, Vladímir Sergyéitch was still stepping out with the free stride of a man who is satisfied with his lot, when suddenly, just at the Passage,[1] he came near colliding with a gentleman in a Spanish cloak and foraging-cap, with a decidedly worn face, a dyed moustache, and large, swollen eyes. Vladímir Sergyéitch drew aside with dignity, but the gentleman in the foraging-cap glanced at him, and suddenly exclaimed:

"Ah! Mr. Astákhoff, how do you do?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch made no reply, and stopped short in surprise. He could not comprehend how a gentleman who could bring himself to walk on the Névsky in a foraging-cap could be acquainted with his name.

"You do not recognise me,"—pursued the gentleman in the cap:—"I saw you eight years ago, in the country, in the T*** Government, at the Ipátoffs'. My name is Véretyeff."

"Akh! Good heavens! excuse me!"—ex-

[1]A large collection of shops, under one roof, extending from the Névsky Prospékt to the Bolshaya Italyánskaya ("Great Italian Street"), in St. Petersburg.—Translator.

claimed Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"But how you have changed since then! . . ."

"Yes, I have grown old,"—returned Piótr Alexyéitch, passing his hand. which was devoid of a glove, over his face.—"But you have not changed."

Véretyeff had not so much aged as fallen away and sunk down. Small, delicate wrinkles covered his face; and when he spoke, his lips and cheeks twitched slightly. From all this it was perceptible that the man had been living hard.

"Where have you disappeared to all this time, that you have not been visible?"—Vladímir Sergyéitch asked him.

"I have been wandering about here and there. And you have been in Petersburg all the while?"

"Yes, most of the time."

"Are you married?"

"Yes."

And Vladímir Sergyéitch assumed a rather severe mien, as though with the object of saying to Véretyeff: "My good fellow, don't take it into thy head to ask me to present thee to my wife."

Véretyeff understood him, apparently. An indifferent sneer barely flitted across his lips.

"And how is your sister?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"Where is she?"

"I cannot tell you for certain. She must be in Moscow. I have not received any letters from her this long time!"

"Is her husband alive?"

"Yes."

"And Mr. Ipátoff?"

"I don't know; probably he is alive also; but he may be dead."

"And that gentleman—what the deuce was his name?—Bodryakóff,—what of him?"

"The one you invited to be your second—you remember, when you were so scared? Why, the devil knows!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch maintained silence for a while, with dignity written on his face.

"I always recall with pleasure those evenings,"—he went on,—"when I had the opportunity" (he had nearly said, "the honour") "of making the acquaintance of your sister and yourself. She was a very amiable person. And do you sing as agreeably as ever?"

"No; I have lost my voice. . . . But that was a good time!"

"I visited Ipátovka once afterward,"—added Vladímir Sergyéitch, elevating his eyebrows mournfully. "I think that was the name of that village—on the very day of a terrible event. . . ."

"Yes, yes, that was frightful, frightful,"—Véretyeff hastily interrupted him.—"Yes, yes. And do you remember how you came near fighting with my present brother-in-law?"

"H'm! I remember!"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch, slowly.—"However, I must confess to

you that so much time has elapsed since then, that all that sometimes seems to me like a dream. . . ."

"Like a dream,"—repeated Véretyeff, and his pale cheeks flushed;—"like a dream . . . . no, it was not a dream, for me at all events. It was the time of youth, of mirth and happiness, the time of unlimited hopes, and invincible powers; and if it was a dream, then it was a very beautiful dream. And now, you and I have grown old and stupid, we dye our moustaches, and saunter on the Névsky, and have become good for nothing; like broken-winded nags, we have become utterly vapid and worn out; it cannot be said that we are pompous and put on airs, nor that we spend our time in idleness; but I fear we drown our grief in drink,—that is more like a dream, and a hideous dream. Life has been lived, and lived in vain, clumsily, vulgarly—that 's what is bitter! That 's what one would like to shake off like a dream, that 's what one would like to recover one's self from! . . . . And then . . . . everywhere, there is one frightful memory, one ghost. . . . But farewell!"

Véretyeff walked hastily away; but on coming opposite the door of one of the principal confectioners on the Névsky, he halted, entered, and after drinking a glass of orange vodka at the buffet, he wended his way through the billiard-room, all dark and dim with tobacco-smoke, to the rear room. There he found several acquaint-

ances, his former comrades—Pétya Lazúrin, Kóstya Kovróvsky, and Prince Serdiukóff, and two other gentlemen who were called simply Vasiúk, and Filát. All of them were men no longer young, though unmarried; some of them had lost their hair, others were growing grey; their faces were covered with wrinkles, their chins had grown double; in a word, these gentlemen had all long since passed their prime, as the saying is. Yet all of them continued to regard Véretyeff as a remarkable man, destined to astonish the universe; and he was wiser than they only because he was very well aware of his utter and radical uselessness. And even outside of his circle, there were people who thought concerning him, that if he had not ruined himself, the deuce only knows what he would have made of himself. . . . These people were mistaken. Nothing ever comes of Véretyeff's.

Piótr Alexyéitch's friends welcomed him with the customary greetings. At first he dumbfounded them with his gloomy aspect and his splenetic speeches; but he speedily calmed down, cheered up, and affairs went on in their wonted rut.

But Vladímir Sergyéitch, as soon as Véretyeff left him, contracted his brows in a frown and straightened himself up. Piótr Alexyéitch's unexpected sally had astounded, even offended him extremely.

"'We have grown stupid, we drink liquor, we dye our moustaches' . . . . *parlez pour vous, mon cher,*"—he said at last, almost aloud, and emitting a couple of snorts caused by an access of involuntary indignation, he was preparing to continue his stroll.

"Who was that talking with you?"—rang out a loud and self-confident voice behind him.

Vladímir Sergyéitch turned round and beheld one of his best friends, a certain Mr. Pompónsky. This Mr. Pompónsky, a man of lofty stature, and stout, occupied a decidedly important post, and never once, from his very earliest youth, had he doubted himself.

"Why, a sort of eccentric,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, linking his arm in Mr. Pompónsky's.

"Good gracious, Vladímir Sergyéitch, is it permissible for a respectable man to chat on the street with an individual who wears a foraging-cap on his head? 'T is indecent! I 'm amazed! Where could you have made acquaintance with such a person?"

"In the country."

"In the country. . . . One does not bow to one's country neighbours in town . . . . *ce n'est pas comme il faut.* A gentleman should always bear himself like a gentleman if he wishes that . . . ."

"Here is my wife,"—Vladímir Sergyéitch hastily interrupted him.—"Let us go to her."

And the two gentlemen directed their steps to a low-hung, elegant carriage, from whose window there peered forth the pale, weary, and irritatingly-arrogant little face of a woman who was still young, but already faded.

Behind her another lady, also apparently in a bad humour,—her mother,—was visible. Vladímir Sergyéitch opened the door of the carriage, and offered his arm to his wife. Pompónsky gave his to the mother-in-law, and the two couples made their way along the Névsky Prospékt, accompanied by a short, black-haired footman in yellowish-grey gaiters, and with a big cockade on his hat.

# IT IS ENOUGH

(1864)

# IT IS ENOUGH

## A FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF A DEAD ARTIST

### I

. . . . . .

### II

. . . . . .

### III

"IT is enough," I said to myself, while my feet, treading unwillingly the steep slope of the mountain, bore me downward toward the quiet river; "it is enough," I repeated, as I inhaled the resinous scent of the pine grove, to which the chill of approaching evening had imparted a peculiar potency and pungency; "it is enough," I said once more, as I seated myself on a mossy hillock directly on the brink of the river and gazed at its dark, unhurried waves, above which a thick growth of reeds lifted their pale-green stalks. . . . "It is enough!—Have done with dreaming, with striving: 't is high time to pull thyself together;

't is high time to clutch thy head with both hands and bid thy heart be still. Give over pampering thyself with the sweet indulgence of indefinite but captivating sensations; give over running after every new form of beauty; give over seizing every tremor of its delicate and powerful pinions.—Everything is known, everything has been felt over and over again many times already. . . . I am weary.—What care I that at this very moment the dawn is suffusing the sky ever more and more broadly, like some inflamed, all-conquering passion! What care I that two paces from me, amid the tranquillity and the tenderness and the gleam of evening, in the dewy depths of a motionless bush, a nightingale has suddenly burst forth in such magical notes as though there had never been any nightingales in the world before it, and as though it were the first to chant the first song of the first love! All that has been, has been, I repeat; it has been recapitulated a thousand times—and when one remembers that all this will so continue for a whole eternity—as though to order, by law—one even grows vexed! Yes . . . . vexed!"

## IV

Eh, how I have suffered! Formerly such thoughts never entered my head—formerly, in those happy days when I myself was wont to

flame like the glow of dawn, and to sing like the nightingale.—I must confess that everything has grown obscure round about me, all life has withered. The light which gives to its colours both significance and power—that light which emanates from the heart of man—has become extinct within me. . . . No, it has not yet become extinct—but it is barely smouldering, without radiance and without warmth. I remember how one day, late at night, in Moscow, I stepped up to the grated window of an ancient church and leaned against the uneven glass. It was dark under the low arches; a forgotten shrine-lamp flickered with a red flame in front of an ancient holy picture, and only the lips of the holy face were visible, stern and suffering: mournful gloom closed in around and seemed to be preparing to crush with its dull weight the faint ray of unnecessary light. . . . And in my heart reign now the same sort of light and the same sort of gloom.

## V

And this I write to thee—to thee, my only and unforgettable friend; to thee, my dear companion,[1] whom I have left forever, but whom I shall never cease to love until my life ends. . . . Alas! thou knowest what it was that separated us. But I will not refer to that now. I have left thee . . .

[1] The Russian shows that a woman is addressed.—Translator.

but even here, in this remote nook, at this distance, in this exile, I am all permeated with thee, I am in thy power as of yore, as of yore I feel the sweet pressure of thy hands upon my bowed head!—Rising up for the last time, from the mute grave in which I now am lying, I run a mild, much-moved glance over all my past, over all our past. . . . There is no hope and no return, but neither is there any bitterness in me, or regret; and clearer than the heavenly azure, purer than the first snows on the mountain heights, are my beautiful memories. . . . They do not press upon me in throngs: they pass by in procession, like those muffled figures of the Athenian god-born ones, which—dost thou remember?—we admired so greatly on the ancient bas-reliefs of the Vatican. . . .

## VI

I HAVE just alluded to the light which emanates from the human heart and illumines everything which surrounds it. . . . I want to talk with thee about that time when that gracious light burned in my heart.—Listen . . . . but I imagine that thou art sitting in front of me, and gazing at me with thine affectionate but almost severely-attentive eyes. O eyes never to be forgotten! On whom, on what are they now fixed? Who is receiving into his soul thy glance—that glance

which seems to flow from unfathomable depths, like those mysterious springs—like you both bright and dark—which well up at the very bottom of narrow valleys, beneath overhanging cliffs? . . . . Listen.

## VII

It was at the end of March, just before the Feast of the Annunciation, shortly after I saw thee for the first time—and before I as yet suspected what thou wert destined to become to me, although I already bore thee, silently and secretly in my heart.—I was obliged to cross one of the largest rivers in Russia. The ice had not yet begun to move in it, but it seemed to have swollen up and turned dark; three days previously a thaw had set in. The snow was melting round about diligently but quietly; everywhere water was oozing out; in the light air a soundless breeze was roving. The same even, milky hue enveloped earth and sky: it was not a mist, but it was not light; not a single object stood out from the general opacity; everything seemed both near and indistinct. Leaving my kibítka far behind, I walked briskly over the river-ice, and with the exception of the beat of my own footsteps, I could hear nothing. I walked on, enveloped on all sides by the first stupor and breath of early spring . . . . and little by little augmenting with every step, with every

movement in advance, there gradually rose up and grew within me a certain joyous incomprehensible agitation. . . . It drew me on, it hastened my pace—and so powerful were its transports, that I came to a standstill at last and looked about me in surprise and questioningly, as though desirous of detecting the outward cause of my ecstatic condition. . . . All was still, white, sunny; but I raised my eyes: high above flocks of migratory birds were flying past. . . . "Spring! Hail, Spring!"—I shouted in a loud voice. "Hail, life and love and happiness!"—And at that same instant, with sweetly-shattering force, similar to the flower of a cactus, there suddenly flared up within me thy image—flared up and stood there, enchantingly clear and beautiful—and I understood that I loved thee, thee alone, that I was all filled with thee. . . .

## VIII

I THINK of thee . . . and many other memories, other pictures rise up before me,—and thou art everywhere, on all the paths of my life I encounter thee.—Now there presents itself to me an old Russian garden on the slope of a hill, illuminated by the last rays of the summer sun. From behind silvery poplars peeps forth the wooden roof of the manor-house, with a slender wreath of crimson smoke hanging above the white

chimney, and in the fence a wicket-gate stands open a crack, as though some one had pulled it to with undecided hand. And I stand and wait, and gaze at that gate and at the sand on the garden paths; I wonder and I am moved: everything I see seems to me remarkable and new, everything is enveloped with an atmosphere of a sort of bright, caressing mystery, and already I think I hear the swift rustle of footsteps; and I stand, all alert and light, like a bird which has just folded its wings and is poised ready to soar aloft again—and my heart flames and quivers in joyous dread before the imminent happiness which is flitting on in front. . . .

## IX

Then I behold an ancient cathedral in a distant, beautiful land. The kneeling people are crowded close in rows; a prayerful chill, something solemn and sad breathes forth from the lofty, bare vault, from the huge pillars which branch upward.—Thou art standing by my side, speechless and unsympathetic, exactly as though thou wert a stranger to me; every fold of thy dark gown hangs motionless, as though sculptured; motionless lie the mottled reflections of the coloured windows at thy feet on the well-worn flagstones. —And now, vigorously agitating the air dim with incense, inwardly agitating us, in a heavy

surge the tones of the organ roll out; and thou hast turned pale and drawn thyself up; thy gaze has touched me, has slipped on higher and is raised heavenward;—but it seems to me that only a deathless soul can look like that and with such eyes. . . .

## X

Now another picture presents itself to me.—'T is not an ancient temple which crushes us with its stern magnificence: the low walls of a cosey little room separate us from the whole world.—What am I saying? We are alone—alone in all the world; except us two there is no living thing; beyond those friendly walls lie darkness and death and emptiness. That is not the wind howling, that is not the rain streaming in floods; it is Chaos wailing and groaning; it is its blind eyes weeping. But with us all is quiet and bright, and warm and gracious; something diverting, something childishly innocent is fluttering about like a butterfly, is it not? We nestle up to each other, we lean our heads together and both read a good book; I feel the slender vein in thy delicate temple beating; I hear how thou art living, thou hearest how I am living, thy smile is born upon my face before it comes on thine; thou silently repliest to my silent question; thy thoughts, my thoughts, are like the two wings of one and the

same bird drowned in the azure. . . The last partitions have fallen—and our love has become so calm, so profound, every breach has vanished so completely, leaving no trace behind it, that we do not even wish to exchange a word, a glance. . . . We only wish to breathe, to breathe together, to live together, to be together, . . . and not even to be conscious of the fact that we are together. . . .

## XI

Or, in conclusion, there presents itself to me a clear September morning when thou and I were walking together through the deserted garden, as yet not wholly out of bloom, of an abandoned palace, on the bank of a great non-Russian river, beneath the soft radiance of a cloudless sky. Oh, how shall I describe those sensations?—that endlessly-flowing river, that absence of people, and tranquillity, and joy, and a certain intoxicating sadness, and the vibration of happiness, the unfamiliar, monotonous town, the autumnal croaking of the daws in the tall, bright trees—and those affectionate speeches and smiles and glances long and soft, which pierce to the very bottom, and beauty,—the beauty in ourselves, round about, everywhere;—it is beyond words. Oh, bench on which we sat in silence, with heads drooping low with happiness—I shall never for-

get thee to my dying hour!—How charming were those rare passers-by with their gentle greeting and kind faces, and the large, quiet boats which floated past (on one of them—dost thou remember?—stood a horse gazing pensively at the water gliding by under its feet), the childish babble of the little waves inshore and the very barking of distant dogs over the expanse of the river, the very shouts of the corpulent under-officer at the red-cheeked recruits drilling there on one side, with their projecting elbows and their legs thrust forward like the legs of cranes! . . . We both felt that there never had been and never would be anything better in the world for us than those moments—than all the rest. . . . But what comparisons are these! Enough . . . . enough. . . . Alas! yes: it is enough.

## XII

For the last time I have surrendered myself to these memories, and I am parting from them irrevocably—as a miser, after gloating for the last time upon his hoard, his gold, his bright treasure, buries it in the damp earth; as the wick of an exhausted lamp, after flashing up in one last brilliant flame, becomes covered with grey ashes. The little wild animal has peered forth for the last time from his lair at the velvety grass, at the fair little sun, at the blue, gracious waters,—and

has retreated to the deepest level, and curled himself up in a ball, and fallen asleep. Will he have visions, if only in his sleep, of the fair little sun, and the grass, and the blue, gracious waters?

. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

## XIII

Sternly and ruthlessly does Fate lead each one of us—and only in the early days do we, occupied with all sorts of accidents, nonsense, ourselves, fail to feel her harsh hand.—So long as we are able to deceive ourselves and are not ashamed to lie, it is possible to live and to hope without shame. The truth—not the full truth (there can be no question of that), but even that tiny fraction which is accessible to us—immediately closes our mouths, binds our hands, and reduces "to negation."—The only thing that is then left for a man, in order to keep erect on his feet and not crumble to dust, not to become bemired in the ooze of self-forgetfulness, . . . is self-scorn; is to turn calmly away from everything and say: "It is enough!"—and folding his useless arms on his empty breast to preserve the last, the sole merit which is accessible to him, the merit of recognising his own insignificance; the merit to which Pascal alludes, when, calling man a think-

ing reed, he says that if the entire universe were to crush him, he, that reed, would still be higher than the universe because he would know that it is crushing him—while it would not know that. A feeble merit! Sad consolation! Try as thou mayest to permeate thyself with it, to believe in it,—oh, thou my poor brother, whosoever thou mayest be!—thou canst not refute those ominous words of the poet:

> Life 's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more: it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing. . .[1]

I have cited the verses from "Macbeth," and those witches, phantoms, visions have recurred to my mind. . . . Alas! it is not visions, not fantastic, subterranean powers that are terrible; the creations of Hoffmann are not dreadful, under whatsoever form they may present themselves. . . . The terrible thing is that there is nothing terrible, that the very substance of life itself is petty, uninteresting—and insipid to beggary. Having once become permeated with *this* consciousness, having once tasted of *this* wormwood, no honey will ever seem sweet—and even that loftiest, sweetest happiness, the happiness of love, of complete friendship, of irrevocable devotion—

[1] "Macbeth," Act V, scene v.

even it loses all its charm; all its worth is annihilated by its own pettiness, its brevity. Well, yes: a man has loved, he has burned, he has faltered words about eternal bliss, about immortal enjoyments—and behold: it is long, long since the last trace vanished of that worm which has eaten out the last remnants of his withered tongue. Thus late in autumn, on a frosty day, when everything is lifeless and dumb in the last blades of grass, on the verge of the denuded forest, the sun has but to emerge for an instant from the fog, to gaze intently at the chilled earth, and immediately, from all sides, gnats rise up; they frolic in the warmth of his rays, they bustle and jostle upward, downward, they circle round one another. . . . The sun hides himself, and the gnats fall to the earth in a soft rain—and there is an end to their momentary life.

## XIV

"But are there no great conceptions, no great words of consolation? Nationality, right, liberty, humanity, art?" Yes; those words do exist, and many people live by them and for them. But nevertheless, I have an idea that if Shakspeare were to be born again he would find no occasion to disclaim his "Hamlet," his "Lear." His penetrating glance would not descry anything new in

human existence: the same motley and, in reality, incoherent picture would still unfold itself before him in its disquieting monotony. The same frivolity, the same cruelty, the same pressing demand for blood, gold, filth, the same stale pleasures, the same senseless sufferings in the name of . . . . well, in the name of the same nonsense which was ridiculed by Aristophanes three thousand years ago, the same coarse lures to which the many-headed beast still yields as readily as ever —in a word, the same anxious skipping of the squirrel in the same old wheel, which has not even been renewed. . . . Shakspeare would again make Lear repeat his harsh: "There are no guilty ones"—which, in other words, signifies: "There are no just"—and he also would say: "It is enough!" and he also would turn away.—One thing only: perhaps, in contrast to the gloomy, tragic tyrant Richard, the ironical genius of the great poet would like to draw another, more up-to-date tyrant, who is almost ready to believe in his own virtue and rests calmly at night or complains of the over-dainty dinner at the same time that his half-stifled victims are endeavouring to comfort themselves by at least imagining him as Richard III. surrounded by the ghosts of the people he has murdered. . . .

But to what purpose?

Why demonstrate—and that by picking and weighing one's words, by rounding and polishing

one's speech—why demonstrate to gnats that they really are gnats?

## XV

But art? . . . Beauty? . . . Yes, those are mighty words; they are, probably, mightier than those which I have mentioned above. The Venus of Melos, for example, is more indubitable than the Roman law, or than the principles of 1789. Men may retort—and how many times have I heard these retorts!—that beauty itself is also a matter of convention, that to the Chinese it presents itself in a totally different manner from what it does to the European. . . . But it is not the conventionality of art which disconcerts me; its perishableness, and again its perishableness,—its decay and dust—that is what deprives me of courage and of faith. Art, at any given moment, is, I grant, more powerful than Nature itself, because in it there is neither symphony of Beethoven nor picture of Ruysdael nor poem of Goethe—and only dull-witted pedants or conscienceless babblers can still talk of art as a copy of Nature. But in the long run Nature is irresistible; she cannot be hurried, and sooner or later she will assert her rights. Unconsciously and infallibly obedient to law, she does not know art, as she does not know liberty, as she does not know good; moving onward from eternity, trans-

mitted from eternity, she tolerates nothing immortal, nothing unchangeable. . . . Man is her child; but the human, the artificial is inimical to her, precisely because she strives to be unchangeable and immortal. Man is the child of Nature; but she is the universal mother, and she has no preferences: everything which exists in her bosom has arisen only for the benefit of another and must, in due time, make way for that other—she creates by destroying, and it is a matter of perfect indifference to her what she creates, what she destroys, if only life be not extirpated, if only death do not lose its rights. . . . And therefore she as calmly covers with mould the divine visage of Phidias's Jupiter as she does a plain pebble, and delivers over to be devoured by the contemned moth the most precious lines of Sophocles. Men, it is true, zealously aid her in her work of extermination; but is not the same elementary force,—is not the force of Nature shown in the finger of the barbarian who senselessly shattered the radiant brow of Apollo, in the beast-like howls with which he hurled the picture of Apelles into the fire? How are we poor men, poor artists, to come to an agreement with this deaf and dumb force, blind from its birth, which does not even triumph in its victories, but marches, ever marches on ahead, devouring all things? How are we to stand up against those heavy, coarse, interminably and incessantly onrolling waves, how believe,

in short, in the significance and worth of those perishable images which we, in the darkness, on the verge of the abyss, mould from the dust and for a mere instant?

## XVI

All this is so . . . . but only the transitory is beautiful, Shakspeare has said; and Nature herself, in the unceasing play of her rising and vanishing forms, does not shun beauty. Is it not she who sedulously adorns the most momentary of her offspring—the petals of the flowers, the wings of the butterfly—with such charming colours? Is it not she who imparts to them such exquisite outlines? It is not necessary for beauty to live forever in order to be immortal—one moment is sufficient for it. That is so; that is just, I grant you—but only in cases where there is no personality, where man is not, liberty is not: the faded wing of the butterfly comes back again, and a thousand years later, with the selfsame wing of the selfsame butterfly, necessity sternly and regularly and impartially fulfils its round . . . . but man does not repeat himself like the butterfly, and the work of his hands, his art, his free creation once destroyed, is annihilated forever. . . . To him alone is it given to " create " . . . . but it is strange and terrible to articulate: " We are creators . . . . for an hour,"—as there once was,

they say, a caliph for an hour.—Therein lies our supremacy—and our curse: each one of these "creators" in himself—precisely he, not any one else, precisely that ego—seems to have been created with deliberate intent, on a plan previously designed; each one more or less dimly understands his significance, feels that he is akin to something higher, something eternal—and he lives, he is bound to live in the moment and for the moment.[1] Sit in the mud, my dear fellow, and strive toward heaven!—The greatest among us are precisely those who are the most profoundly conscious of all of that fundamental contradiction; but in that case the question arises,—are the words "greatest, great" appropriate?

## XVII

But what shall be said of those to whom, despite a thorough desire to do so, one cannot apply those appellations even in the sense which is attributed to them by the feeble human tongue?—What shall be said of the ordinary, commonplace, second-rate, third-rate toilers—whoever they may be—statesmen, learned men, artists—especially ar-

[1] How can one fail to recall at this point the words of Mephistopheles in "Faust":

"Er (Gott) findet sich in einen ew'gen Glanze,
Uns hat er in die Finsterniss gebracht—
Und euch taugt einzig Tag und Nacht."

tists? How force them to shake off their dumb indolence, their dejected perplexity, how draw them once more to the field of battle, if once the thought as to the vanity of everything human, of every activity which sets for itself a higher aim than the winning of daily bread, has once crept into their heads? By what wreaths are they lured on—they, for whom laurels and thorns have become equally insignificant? Why should they again subject themselves to the laughter of "the cold throng" or to "the condemnation of the dunce,"—of the old dunce who cannot forgive them for having turned away from the former idols; of the young dunce who demands that they shall immediately go down on their knees in his company, that they should lie prone before new, just-discovered idols? Why shall they betake themselves again to that rag-fair of phantoms, to that market-place where both the seller and the buyer cheat each other equally, where everything is so noisy, so loud—and yet so poor and worthless? Why "with exhaustion in their bones" shall they interweave themselves again with that world where the nations, like peasant urchins on a festival day, flounder about in the mud for the sake of a handful of empty nuts, or admire with gaping mouths the wretched woodcuts, decorated with tinsel gold,—with that world where they had no right to life while they lived in it, and, deafening themselves with their own shouts, each one

hastens with convulsive speed to a goal which he neither knows nor understands? No . . . . no . . . . It is enough . . . . enough . . . . enough!

## XVIII

. . . . THE rest is silence.[1] . . .

[1] This is in English in the original. — TRANSLATOR.

# THE DOG

(1866)

# THE DOG

"BUT if we can admit the possibility of the supernatural, the possibility of its intervention in real life,—then allow me to inquire, what rôle is sound judgment bound to play after this?"—shouted Antón Stepánitch, crossing his arms on his stomach.

Antón Stepánitch had held the rank of State Councillor,[1] had served in some wonderful department, and, as his speech was interlarded with pauses and was slow and uttered in a bass voice, he enjoyed universal respect. Not long before the date of our story, "the good-for-nothing little Order of St. Stanislas had been stuck on him," as those who envied him expressed it.

"That is perfectly just,"—remarked Skvorévitch.

"No one will dispute that,"—added Kinarévitch.

"I assent also,"—chimed in, in falsetto, from a corner the master of the house, Mr. Finoplén-toff.

[1] The fifth (from the top) of the fourteen grades in the Table of Ranks, instituted by Peter the Great, which were to be won by service to the State.—TRANSLATOR.

"But I, I must confess, cannot assent, because something supernatural has happened to me,"—said a man of medium stature and middle age, with a protruding abdomen and a bald spot, who had been sitting silent before the stove up to that moment. The glances of all present in the room were turned upon him with curiosity and surprise—and silence reigned.

This man was a landed proprietor of Kalúga, not wealthy, who had recently come to Petersburg. He had once served in the hussars, had gambled away his property, resigned from the service and settled down in the country. The recent agricultural changes had cut off his revenues, and he had betaken himself to the capital in search of a snug little position. He possessed no abilities, and had no influential connections; but he placed great reliance on the friendship of an old comrade in the service, who had suddenly, without rhyme or reason, become a person of importance, and whom he had once aided to administer a sound thrashing to a card-sharper. Over and above that he counted upon his own luck—and it had not betrayed him; several days later he obtained the post of inspector of government storehouses, a profitable, even honourable position, which did not require extraordinary talents: the storehouses themselves existed only in contemplation, and no one even knew with cer-

tainty what they were to contain,—but they had been devised as a measure of governmental economy.

Antón Stepánitch was the first to break the general silence.

"What, my dear sir?"—he began. "Do you seriously assert that something supernatural—I mean to say, incompatible with the laws of nature—has happened to you?"

"I do,"—returned "my dear sir," whose real name was Porfíry Kapítonitch.

"Incompatible with the laws of nature?"—energetically repeated Antón Stepánitch, who evidently liked that phrase.

"Precisely . . . . yes; precisely the sort of thing you allude to."

"This is astonishing! What think you, gentlemen?"—Antón Stepánitch endeavoured to impart to his features an ironical expression, but without result—or, to speak more accurately, the only result was to produce the effect that Mr. State Councillor smelt a bad odour.—"Will not you be so kind, my dear sir,"—he went on, addressing the landed proprietor from Kalúga,—"as to communicate to us the particulars of such a curious event?"

"Why not? Certainly!"—replied the landed proprietor, and moving forward to the middle of the room in an easy manner, he spoke as follows:

I HAVE, gentlemen, as you are probably aware, —or as you may not be aware,—a small estate in Kozyól County. I formerly derived some profit from it—but now, of course, nothing but unpleasantness is to be anticipated. However, let us put politics aside! Well, sir, on that same estate I have a "wee little" manor: a vegetable garden, as is proper, a tiny pond with little carp, and some sort of buildings—well, and a small wing for my own sinful body. . . . I am a bachelor. So, sir, one day—about six years ago—I had returned home rather late; I had been playing cards at a neighbour's house—but I beg you to observe, I was not tipsy, as the expression goes. I undressed, got into bed, and blew out the light. And just imagine, gentlemen; no sooner had I blown out the light, than something began to rummage under my bed! Is it a rat? I thought. No, it was not a rat: it clawed and fidgeted and scratched itself. . . . . At last it began to flap its ears!

It was a dog—that was clear. But where had the dog come from? I keep none myself. "Can some stray animal have run in?" I thought. I called to my servant; his name is Fílka. The man entered with a candle.

"What 's this,"—says I,—"my good Fílka? How lax thou art! A dog has intruded himself under my bed."

"What dog?"—says he.

"How should I know?"—says I;—"that 's thy affair—not to allow thy master to be disturbed."

My Fílka bent down, and began to pass the candle about under the bed.

"Why,"—says he,—"there 's no dog here."

I bent down also; in fact there was no dog. . . . Here was a marvel! I turned my eyes on Fílka: he was smiling.

"Fool,"—said I to him,—"what art thou grinning about? When thou didst open the door the dog probably took and sneaked out into the anteroom. But thou, gaper, didst notice nothing, because thou art eternally asleep. Can it be that thou thinkest I am drunk?"

He attempted to reply, but I drove him out, curled myself up in a ring, and heard nothing more that night.

But on the following night—just imagine!—the same thing was repeated. No sooner had I blown out the light than it began to claw and flap its ears. Again I summoned Fílka, again he looked under the bed—again nothing! I sent him away, blew out the light—phew, damn it! there was the dog still. And a dog it certainly was: I could hear it breathing and rummaging in its hair with its teeth in search of fleas . . . so plainly!

"Fílka!"—says I,—"come hither without a light!" . . . He entered. . . . "Well, now,"—says I, "dost thou hear? . . ."

"I do,"—said he. I could not see him, but I felt that the fellow was quailing.

"What dost thou make of it?"—said I.

"What dost thou command me to make of it, Porfíry Kapítonitch? . . . 'T is an instigation of the Evil One!"

"Thou art a lewd fellow; hold thy tongue with thy instigation of the Evil One." . . . But the voices of both of us were like those of birds, and we were shaking as though in a fever—in the darkness. I lighted a candle: there was no dog, and no noise whatever—only Fílka and I as white as clay. And I must inform you, gentlemen—you can believe me or not—but from that night forth for the space of six weeks the same thing went on. At last I even got accustomed to it and took to extinguishing my light because I cannot sleep with a light. "Let him fidget!" I thought. "It does n't harm me."

"But—I see—that you do not belong to the cowardly squad,"—interrupted Antón Stepánitch, with a half-scornful, half-condescending laugh. "The hussar is immediately perceptible!"

"I should not be frightened at you, in any case,"—said Porfíry Kapítonitch, and for a moment he really did look like a hussar.—"But listen further."

A neighbour came to me, the same one with whom I was in the habit of playing cards. He dined with me on what God had sent, and lost fifty rubles to me for his visit; night was drawing on—it was time for him to go. But I had calculations of my own:—"Stop and spend the night with me, Vasíly Vasílitch; to-morrow thou wilt win it back, God willing."

My Vasíly Vasílitch pondered and pondered—and stayed. I ordered a bed to be placed for him in my own chamber. . . . Well, sir, we went to bed, smoked, chattered,—chiefly about the feminine sex, as is fitting in bachelor society,—and laughed, as a matter of course. I look; Vasíly Vasílitch has put out his candle and has turned his back on me; that signifies: *"Schlafen Sie wohl."* I waited a little and extinguished my candle also. And imagine: before I had time to think to myself, "What sort of performance will there be now?" my dear little animal began to make a row. And that was not all; he crawled out from under the bed, walked across the room, clattering his claws on the floor, waggling his ears, and suddenly collided with a chair which stood by the side of Vasíly Vasílitch's bed!

"Porfíry Kapítonitch,"—says Vasíly Vasílitch, and in such an indifferent voice, you know,—"I did n't know that thou hadst taken to keeping a dog. What sort of an animal is it—a setter?"

" I have no dog,"—said I,—" and I never have had one."

" Thou hast not indeed! But what 's this? "

" What is this? "—said I.—" See here now; light the candle and thou wilt find out for thyself."

" It is n't a dog? "

" No."

Vasíly Vasílitch turned over in bed.—" But thou art jesting, damn it? "

" No, I 'm not jesting."—I hear him go scratch, scratch with a match, and that thing does not stop, but scratches its side. The flame flashed up . . . . and basta! There was not a trace of a dog! Vasíly Vasílitch stared at me—and I stared at him.

" What sort of a trick is this? "—said he.

" Why,"—said I,—" this is such a trick that if thou wert to set Socrates himself on one side and Frederick the Great on the other even they could n't make head or tail of it."—And thereupon I told him all in detail. Up jumped my Vasíly Vasílitch as though he had been singed! He could n't get into his boots.

" Horses! "—he yelled—" horses! "

I began to argue with him, but in vain. He simply groaned.

" I won't stay,"—he shouted,—" not a minute!—Of course, after this, thou art a doomed man!—Horses! . . . ."

But I prevailed upon him. Only his bed was dragged out into another room—and night-lights were lighted everywhere. In the morning, at tea, he recovered his dignity; he began to give me advice.

" Thou shouldst try absenting thyself from the house for several days, Porfíry Kapítonitch," he said: " perhaps that vile thing would leave thee."

But I must tell you that he—that neighbour of mine—had a capacious mind! he worked his mother-in-law so famously among other things: he palmed off a note of hand on her; which signifies that he chose the most vulnerable moment! She became like silk: she gave him a power of attorney over all her property—what more would you have? But that was a great affair—to twist his mother-in-law round his finger—was n't it, hey? Judge for yourselves. But he went away from me somewhat discontented; I had punished him to the extent of another hundred rubles. He even swore at me: " Thou art ungrateful,"—he said, " thou hast no feeling; " but how was I to blame for that? Well, this is in parenthesis—but I took his suggestion under consideration. That same day I drove off to town and established myself in an inn, with an acquaintance, an old man of the Old Ritualist sect.[1]

He was a worthy old man, although a trifle

[1] Those who reject the official and necessary corrections made in the Scriptures and Church service books in the reign of Peter the Great's father.—TRANSLATOR.

harsh, because of loneliness: his whole family were dead. Only he did not favour tobacco at all,[1] and felt a great loathing for dogs; I believe, for example, that rather than admit a dog into the room he would have rent himself in twain! "For how is it possible?"—he said. "There in my room, on the wall, the Sovereign Lady herself deigns to dwell;[2] and shall a filthy dog thrust his accursed snout in there?"—That was ignorance, of course! However, this is my opinion: if any man has been vouchsafed wisdom, let him hold to it!

"But you are a great philosopher, I see,"—interrupted Antón Stepánitch again, with the same laugh as before.

This time Porfíry Kapítonitch even scowled.

"What sort of a philosopher I am no one knows,"—he said as his moustache twitched in a surly manner:—"but I would gladly take you as a pupil."

We all fairly bored our eyes into Antón Stepánitch; each one of us expected an arrogant retort or at least a lightning glance. . . . But Mr. State Councillor altered his smile from scorn to indifference, then yawned, dangled his foot—and that was all!

[1] The Old Ritualists oppose tea, coffee, and tobacco, chiefly, it would seem, because they are "newfangled," having come into use after the schism. Later on they invented curious religious reasons for their denunciation of these and other things.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] The holy picture (*ikóna*) of the Mother of Christ.—TRANSLATOR.

So then, I settled down at that old man's house—[went on Porfíry Kapítonitch].—He assigned me a room "for acquaintance's" sake,—not of the best; he himself lodged there also, behind a partition—and that was all I required. But what tortures I did undergo! The chamber was small, it was hot, stifling, and there were flies, and such sticky ones; in the corner was a remarkably large case for images, with ancient holy pictures; their garments were dim and puffed out; the air was fairly infected with olive-oil, and some sort of a spice in addition; on the bedstead were two down beds; if you moved a pillow, out ran a cockroach from beneath it. . . I drank an incredible amount of tea, out of sheer tedium—it was simply horrible! I got into bed; it was impossible to sleep.—And on the other side of the partition my host was sighing and grunting and reciting his prayers. I heard him begin to snore—and very lightly and courteously, in old-fashioned style. I had long since extinguished my candle—only the shrine-lamp was twinkling in front of the holy pictures. . . . A hindrance, of course! So I took and rose up softly, in my bare feet: I reached up to the lamp and blew it out. . . . Nothing happened.—"Aha!" I thought: "this means that he won't make a fuss in the house of strangers." . . . But no sooner had I lain down on the bed than the row began again! The thing clawed, and

scratched himself and flapped his ears . . . . well, just as I wanted him to. Good! I lay there and waited to see what would happen. I heard the old man wake up.

"Master,"—said he,—"hey there, master?"

"What 's wanted?"—said I.

"Was it thou who didst put out the shrine-lamp?"—And without awaiting my reply, he suddenly began to mumble:

"What 's that? What 's that? A dog? A dog? Akh, thou damned Nikonian!"[1]

"Wait a bit, old man,"—said I,—"before thou cursest; but it would be better for thee to come hither thyself. Things deserving of wonder are going on here,"—said I.

The old man fussed about behind the partition and entered my room with a candle, a slender one, of yellow wax; and I was amazed as I looked at him! He was all bristling, with shaggy ears and vicious eyes like those of a polecat; on his head was a small skull-cap of white felt; his beard reached to his girdle and was white also; and he had on a waistcoat with brass buttons over his shirt, and fur boots on his feet, and he disseminated an odour of juniper. In that condition he went up to the holy pictures, crossed himself thrice with two fingers[2] lighted the shrine-lamp,

[1] The Old Ritualists' most opprobrious epithet, designating a member of the State Church, which accepted the emendations instituted by Patriarch Níkon referred to in a previous note.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] One of the hotly disputed points of difference between the Old

crossed himself again, and turning to me, merely grunted:

"Explain thyself!"

Thereupon, without the least delay, I communicated to him all the circumstances. The old man listened to all my explanations without uttering the smallest word; he simply kept shaking his head. Then he sat down on my bed, still maintaining silence. He scratched his breast, the back of his head, and other places, and still remained silent.

"Well, Feodúl Ivánitch,"—said I, "what is thy opinion: is this some sort of visitation of the Evil One, thinkest thou?"

The old man stared at me.—"A pretty thing thou hast invented! A visitation of the Evil One, forsooth! 'T would be all right at thy house, thou tobacco-user,—but 't is quite another thing here! Only consider how many holy things there are here! And thou must needs have a visitation of the devil!—And if it is n't that, what is it?"

The old man relapsed into silence, scratched himself again, and at last he said, but in a dull sort of way, because his moustache kept crawling into his mouth:

"Go thou to the town of Byéleff. There is only one man who can help thee. And that man

Ritualists and the members of the State Church is in their manner of crossing themselves. The latter use the forefinger, middle finger, and thumb joined at the tips.—TRANSLATOR.

dwells in Byéleff;[1] he is one of our people. If he takes a fancy to help thee, that 's thy good luck; if he does n't take a fancy,—so it must remain."

"But how am I to find him?"—said I.

"We can give thee directions,"—said he;—"only why dost thou call this a visitation of the devil? 'T is a vision, or a sign; but thou wilt not be able to comprehend it; 't is not within thy flight. And now lie down and sleep under Christ's protection, dear little father; I will fumigate with incense; and in the morning we will take counsel together. The morning is wiser than the evening, thou knowest."

Well, sir, and we did take counsel together in the morning—only I came near choking to death with that same incense. And the old man instructed me after this wise: that when I had reached Byéleff I was to go to the public square, and in the second shop on the right inquire for a certain Prokhóritch; and having found Prokhóritch, I was to hand him a document. And the whole document consisted of a scrap of paper, on which was written the following: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. To Sergyéi Prokhóritch Pervúshin. Trust this man. Feodúly Ivánovitch." And below: "Send some cabbages, for God's sake."

[1] In the government of Tula, central Russia.—TRANSLATOR.

I thanked the old man, and without further ado ordered my tarantás to be harnessed, and set off for Byéleff. For I argued in this way: admitting that my nocturnal visitor did not cause me much grief, still, nevertheless, it was not quite decorous for a nobleman and an officer—what do you think about it?

"And did you really go to Byéleff?"—whispered Mr. Finopléntoff.

I did, straight to Byéleff. I went to the square, and inquired in the second shop on the right for Prokhóritch. "Is there such a man?"—I asked.

"There is,"—I was told.

"And where does he live?"

"On the Oká, beyond the vegetable-gardens."

"In whose house?"[1]

"His own."

I wended my way to the Oká, searched out his house, that is to say, not actually a house, but a downright hovel. I beheld a man in a patched blue overcoat and a tattered cap,—of the petty burgher class, judging by his appearance,—standing with his back to me, and digging in his cabbage-garden.—I went up to him.

"Are you such and such a one?"—said I.

[1] Formerly, houses were not numbered, and addresses ran: "In the house of * * *" (the proprietor, man or woman), often with many complicated directions added to designate the special house. These ancient addresses still remain, along with the numbers or alone, especially on many of the houses in Moscow, and in country towns.—TRANSLATOR.

He turned round,—and to tell you the truth, such piercing eyes I have never seen in all my life. But his whole face was no bigger than one's fist; his beard was wedge-shaped, and his lips were sunken: he was an aged man.

"I am he,"—he said.—"What do you wanta?"

"Why, here,"—said I;—"this is what I wanta,"—and I placed the document in his hand. He gazed at me very intently, and said:

"Please come into the house; I cannot read without my spectacles."

Well, sir, he and I went into his kennel—actually, a regular kennel; poor, bare, crooked; it barely held together. On the wall was a holy picture of ancient work,[1] as black as a coal; only the whites of the eyes were fairly burning in the faces of the holy people. He took some round iron spectacles from a small table, placed them on his nose, perused the writing, and through his spectacles again scrutinised me.

"You have need of me?"

"I have,"—said I,—"that 's the fact."

"Well,"—said he, "if you have, then make your statement, and I will listen."

And just imagine; he sat down, and pulling a checked handkerchief from his pocket, he spread it out on his knees—and the handkerchief was full of holes—and gazed at me as solemnly as

[1] Old Ritualists will tolerate no others. Neither will they employ the words "buy" or "sell" in connection with these ikónas; they say "exchange."—TRANSLATOR.

though he had been a senator,[1] or some minister or other; and did not ask me to sit down. And what was still more astonishing, I suddenly felt myself growing timid, so timid . . . . simply, my soul sank into my heels. He pierced me through and through with his eyes, and that 's all there is to be said! But I recovered my self-possession, and narrated to him my whole story. He remained silent for a while, shrank together, mowed with his lips, and then began to interrogate me, still as though he were a senator, so majestically and without haste. "What is your name?"—he asked. "How old are you? Who were your parents? Are you a bachelor or married?"—Then he began to mow with his lips again, frowned, thrust out his finger and said:

"Do reverence to the holy image of the honourable saints of Solovétzk,[2] Zósim and Savváty."

I made a reverence to the earth, and did not rise to my feet; such awe and submission did I feel for that man that I believe I would have instantly done anything whatsoever he might have ordered me! . . . . I see that you are smiling, gentlemen; but I was in no mood for laughing then, by Heaven I was not.

"Rise, sir,"—he said at last.—"It is possible to help you. This has not been sent to you by

[1] The Senate in Russia is the Supreme Court of Appeals, and the senators are appointed, not elected.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] A famous monastery on an island in the White Sea.—TRANSLATOR.

way of punishment, but as a warning; it signifies that you are being looked after; some one is praying earnestly for you. Go now to the bazaar and buy yourself a bitch, which you must keep by you day and night, without ceasing. Your visions will cease, and your dog will prove necessary to you into the bargain."

A flash of light seemed suddenly to illuminate me; how those words did please me! I made obeisance to Prokhóritch, and was on the point of departing, but remembered that it was impossible for me not to show him my gratitude; I drew a three-ruble note from my pocket. But he put aside my hand and said to me:

" Give it to our chapel, or to the poor, for this service is gratis."

Again I made him an obeisance, nearly to the girdle, and immediately marched off to the bazaar. And fancy, no sooner had I begun to approach the shops when behold, a man in a frieze cloak advanced to meet me, and under his arm he carried a setter bitch, two months old, with light-brown hair, a white muzzle, and white fore paws.

" Halt! " said I to the man in the frieze cloak; " what will you take for her? "

" Two rubles in silver."

" Take three! "

The man was astonished, and thought the gentleman had lost his mind—but I threw a banknote in his teeth, seized the bitch in my arms, and

rushed to my tarantás. The coachman harnessed up the horses briskly, and that same evening I was at home. The dog sat on my lap during the whole journey—and never uttered a sound; but I kept saying to her: "Tresórushko! Tresórushko!" I immediately gave her food and water, ordered straw to be brought, put her to bed, and dashed into bed myself. I blew out the light; darkness reigned.

"Come now, begin!"—said I.—Silence.—"Do begin, thou thus and so!"—Not a sound. It was laughable. I began to take courage.—"Come now, begin, thou thus and so, and 't other thing!" But nothing happened—there was a complete lull! The only thing to be heard was the bitch breathing hard.

"Fílka!"—I shouted;—"Fílka! Come hither, stupid man!"—He entered.—"Dost thou hear the dog?"

"No, master,"—said he,—"I don't hear anything,"—and began to laugh.

"And thou wilt not hear it again forever! Here 's half a ruble for thee for vodka!"

"Please let me kiss your hand,"—said the fool, and crawled to me in the dark. . . . My joy was great, I can tell you!

"And was that the end of it all?"—asked Antón Stepánitch, no longer ironically.

The visions did cease, it is true—and there were no disturbances of any sort—but wait, that

was not the end of the whole matter. My Tresó-rushko began to grow, and turned out a cunning rogue. Thick-tailed, heavy, flop-eared, with drooping dewlaps, she was a regular "take-advance,"—a thoroughgoing good setter. And moreover, she became greatly attached to me. Hunting is bad in our parts,—well, but as I had set up a dog I had to supply myself with a gun also. I began to roam about the surrounding country with my Tresór; sometimes I would knock over a hare (my heavens, how she did course those hares!), and sometimes a quail or a duck. But the chief point was that Tresór never, never strayed a step away from me. Wherever I went, there she went also; I even took her to the bath with me—truly! One of our young gentlewomen undertook to eject me from her drawing-room on account of Tresór; but I raised such a row that I smashed some of her window-panes!

Well, sir, one day—it happened in summer. . . . . And I must tell you that there was such a drought that no one could recall its like; the air was full of something which was neither smoke nor fog; there was an odour of burning, and mist, and the sun was like a red-hot cannon-ball; and the dust was such that one could not leave off sneezing! People went about with their mouths gaping open, just like crows.

It bored me to sit at home constantly in complete undress, behind closed shutters; and by the

way, the heat was beginning to moderate. . . . And so, gentlemen, I set off afoot to the house of one of my neighbours. This neighbour of mine lived about a verst from me,—and was really a benevolent lady. She was still young and blooming, and of the most attractive exterior; only she had a fickle disposition. But that is no detriment in the feminine sex; it even affords pleasure. . . . So, then, I trudged to her porch—and that trip seemed very salt to me! Well, I thought, Nimfodóra Semyónovna will regale me with bilberry-water, and other refreshments—and I had already grasped the door-handle when, suddenly, around the corner of the servants' cottage there arose a trampling of feet, a squealing and shouting of small boys. . . . I looked round. O Lord, my God! Straight toward me was dashing a huge, reddish beast, which at first sight I did not recognise as a dog; its jaws were gaping, its eyes were blood-shot, its hair stood on end. . . . Before I could take breath the monster leaped upon the porch, elevated itself on its hind legs, and fell straight on my breast. What do you think of that situation? I was swooning with fright, and could not lift my arms; I was completely stupefied; . . . . all I could see were the white tusks right at the end of my nose, the red tongue all swathed in foam. But at that moment another dark body soared through the air in front of me, like a ball—it was my darling Tresór coming to

my rescue; and she went at that beast's throat like a leech! The beast rattled hoarsely in the throat, gnashed its teeth, staggered back. . . . With one jerk I tore open the door, and found myself in the anteroom. I stood there, beside myself with terror, threw my whole body against the lock, and listened to a desperate battle which was in progress on the porch. I began to shout, to call for help; every one in the house took alarm. Nimfodóra Semyónovna ran up with hair unbraided; voices clamoured in the courtyard—and suddenly there came a cry: "Hold him, hold him, lock the gate!"

I opened the door,—just a crack,—and looked. The monster was no longer on the porch. People were rushing in disorder about the courtyard, flourishing their arms, picking up billets of wood from the ground—just as though they had gone mad. "To the village! It has run to the village!" shrieked shrilly a peasant-woman in a pointed coronet head-dress of unusual dimensions, thrusting her head through a garret-window. I emerged from the house.

"Where is Tresór?"—said I.—And at that moment I caught sight of my saviour. She was walking away from the gate, limping, all bitten, and covered with blood. . .

"But what was it, after all?"—I asked the people, as they went circling round the courtyard like crazy folk.

"A mad dog!"—they answered me, "belonging to the Count; it has been roving about here since yesterday."

We had a neighbour, a Count; he had introduced some very dreadful dogs from over-sea. My knees gave way beneath me; I hastened to the mirror and looked to see whether I had been bitten. No; God be thanked, nothing was visible; only, naturally, my face was all green; but Nimfodóra Semyónovna was lying on the couch, and clucking like a hen. And that was easily to be understood: in the first place, nerves; in the second place, sensibility. But she came to herself, and asked me in a very languid way: was I alive? I told her that I was, and that Tresór was my saviour.

"Akh,"—said she,—"what nobility! And I suppose the mad dog smothered her?"

"No,"—said I,—"it did not smother her, but it wounded her seriously."

"Akh,"—said she,—"in that case, she must be shot this very moment!"

"Nothing of the sort,"—said I;—"I won't agree to that; I shall try to cure her." . . . .

In the meanwhile, Tresór began to scratch at the door; I started to open it for her.

"Akh,"—cried she,—"what are you doing? Why, she will bite us all dreadfully!"

"Pardon me,"—said I,—"the poison does not take effect so soon."

"Akh,"—said she,—"how is that possible? Why, you have gone out of your mind!"

"Nimfótchka,"—said I,—"calm thyself; listen to reason. . . ."

But all at once she began to scream: "Go away; go away this instant with your disgusting dog!"

"I will go,"—said I.

"Instantly,"—said she,—"this very second! Take thyself off, brigand,"—said she,—"and don't dare ever to show yourself in my sight again. Thou mightest go mad thyself!"

"Very good, ma'am,"—said I; "only give me an equipage, for I am afraid to go home on foot now."

She riveted her eyes on me. "Give, give him a calash, a carriage, a drozhky, whatever he wants, —anything, for the sake of getting rid of him as quickly as possible. Akh, what eyes! akh, what eyes he has!"—And with these words she flew out of the room, dealing a maid who was entering a box on the ear,—and I heard her go off into another fit of hysterics.—And you may believe me or not, gentlemen, but from that day forth I broke off all acquaintance with Nimfodóra Semyónovna; and, taking all things into mature consideration, I cannot but add that for that circumstance also I owe my friend Tresór a debt of gratitude until I lie down in my coffin.

Well, sir, I ordered a calash to be harnessed, placed Tresór in it, and drove off home with her.

At home I looked her over, washed her wounds, and thought to myself: " I 'll take her to-morrow, as soon as it is light, to the wizard in Efrém County. Now this wizard was an old peasant, a wonderful man; he would whisper over water —but others say that he emitted serpents' venom on it—and give it to you to drink, and your malady would instantly disappear. By the way, I thought, I 'll get myself bled in Efrémovo; 't is a good remedy for terror; only, of course, not from the arm, but from the bleeding-vein.

" But where is that place—the bleeding-vein? " —inquired Finopléntoff, with bashful curiosity.

Don't you know? That spot on the fist close to the thumb, on which one shakes snuff from the horn.—Just here, see! 'T is the very best place for blood-letting; therefore, judge for yourselves; from the arm it will be venal blood, while from this spot it is sparkling. The doctors don't know that, and don't understand it; how should they, the sluggards, the dumb idiots? Blacksmiths chiefly make use of it. And what skilful fellows they are! They 'll place their chisel on the spot, give it a whack with their hammer— and the deed is done! . . . . Well, sir, while I was meditating in this wise, it had grown entirely dark out of doors, and it was time to go to sleep. I lay down on my bed, and Tresór, of course, was there also. But whether it was because of my fright or of the stifling heat, or because the fleas

or my thoughts were bothersome, at any rate, I could not get to sleep. Such distress fell upon me as it is impossible to describe; and I kept drinking water, and opening the window, and thrumming the "Kamárynskaya"[1] on the guitar, with Italian variations. . . . In vain! I felt impelled to leave the room,—and that 's all there was to it. At last I made up my mind. I took a pillow, a coverlet, and a sheet, and wended my way across the garden to the hay-barn; well, and there I settled myself. And there things were agreeable to me, gentlemen; the night was still, extremely still, only now and then a breeze as soft as a woman's hand would blow across my cheek, and it was very cool; the hay was fragrant as tea, the katydids were rasping in the apple-trees; then suddenly a quail would emit its call—and you would feel that he was taking his ease, the scamp, sitting in the dew with his mate. . . . And the sky was so magnificent; the stars were twinkling, and sometimes a little cloud, as white as wadding, would float past, and even it would hardly stir. . . .

At this point in the narrative, Skvorévitch sneezed; Kinarévitch, who never lagged behind his comrade in anything, sneezed also. Antón Stepánitch cast a glance of approbation at both.

Well, sir—[went on Porfíry Kapítonitch],—

[1] A vivacious and favourite popular dance-tune. It is several centuries old, and of interesting historical origin.—TRANSLATOR.

so I lay there, and still I could not get to sleep. A fit of meditation had seized upon me; and I pondered chiefly over the great marvel, how that Prokhóritch had rightly explained to me about the warning—and why such wonders should happen to me in particular. . . . I was astonished, in fact, because I could not understand it at all —while Tresórushko whimpered as she curled herself up on the hay; her wounds were paining her. And I 'll tell you another thing that kept me from sleeping—you will hardly believe it; the moon! It stood right in front of me, so round and big and yellow and flat; and it seemed to me as though it were staring at me—by Heaven it did; and so arrogantly, importunately. . . . At last I stuck my tongue out at it, I really did. Come, I thought, what art thou so curious about? I turned away from it; but it crawled into my ear, it illuminated the back of my head, and flooded me as though with rain; I opened my eyes, and what did I see? It made every blade of grass, every wretched little blade in the hay, the most insignificant spider's web, stand out distinctly! " Well, look, then! " said I. There was no help for it. I propped my head on my hand and began to stare at it. But I could not keep it up; if you will believe it, my eyes began to stick out like a hare's and to open very wide indeed, just as though they did not know what sleep was like. I think I could have eaten up everything

with those same eyes. The gate of the hay-barn stood wide open; I could see for a distance of five versts out on the plain; and distinctly, not in the usual way on a moonlight night. So I gazed and gazed, and did not even wink. . . . And suddenly it seemed to me as though something were waving about far, far away . . . . exactly as though things were glimmering indistinctly before my eyes. Some time elapsed; again a shadow leaped across my vision,—a little nearer now; then again, still nearer. What is it? I thought. Can it be a hare? No, I thought, it is larger than a hare, and its gait is unlike that of a hare. I continued to look, and again the shadow showed itself, and it was moving now across the pasture-land (and the pasture-land was whitish from the moonlight) like a very large spot; it was plain that it was some sort of a wild beast—a fox or a wolf. My heart contracted within me . . . . but what was I afraid of, after all? Are n't there plenty of wild animals running about the fields by night? But my curiosity was stronger than my fears; I rose up, opened my eyes very wide, and suddenly turned cold all over. I fairly froze rigid on the spot, as though I had been buried in ice up to my ears; and why? The Lord only knows! And I saw the shadow growing bigger and bigger, which meant that it was making straight for the hay-barn. . . . And then it became apparent to me that it really was a large,

big-headed wild beast. . . . It dashed onward like a whirlwind, like a bullet. . . . Good heavens! What was it? Suddenly it stopped short, as though it scented something. . . . Why, it was the mad dog I had encountered that day! 'T was he, 't was he! O Lord! And I could not stir a finger, I could not shout. . . . It ran to the gate, glared about with its eyes, emitted a howl, and dashed straight for me on the hay!

But out of the hay, like a lion, sprang my Tresór; and then the struggle began. The two clinched jaw to jaw, and rolled over the ground in a ball! What took place further I do not remember; all I do remember is that I flew head over heels across them, just as I was, into the garden, into the house, and into my own bedroom! . . . . I almost dived under the bed—there 's no use in concealing the fact. And what leaps, what bounds I made in the garden! You would have taken me for the leading ballerina who dances before the Emperor Napoleon on the day of his Angel—and even she could n't have overtaken me. But when I had recovered myself a little, I immediately routed out the entire household; I ordered them all to arm themselves, and I myself took a sword and a revolver. (I must confess that I had purchased that revolver after the Emancipation, in case of need, you know—only I had hit upon such a beast of a pedlar that out of three charges two inevitably missed fire.)

Well, sir, I took all this, and in this guise we sallied forth, in a regular horde, with staves and lanterns, and directed our footsteps toward the hay-barn. We reached it and called—nothing was to be heard; we entered the barn at last. . . . . And what did we see? My poor Tresórushko lay dead, with her throat slit, and that accursed beast had vanished without leaving a trace!

Then, gentlemen, I began to bleat like a calf, and I will say it without shame; I fell down on the body of my twofold rescuer, so to speak, and kissed her head for a long time. And there I remained in that attitude until my old housekeeper, Praskóvya, brought me to my senses (she also had run out at the uproar).

"Why do you grieve so over the dog, Porfíry Stepánitch?"—said she. "You will surely catch cold, which God forbid!" (I was very lightly clad.) "And if that dog lost her life in saving you, she ought to reckon it as a great favour!"

Although I did not agree with Praskóvya, I went back to the house. And the mad dog was shot on the following day by a soldier from the garrison. And it must have been that that was the end appointed by Fate to the dog, for the soldier fired a gun for the first time in his life, although he had a medal for service in the year '12. So that is the supernatural occurrence which happened to me.

The narrator ceased speaking and began to fill his pipe. But we all exchanged glances of surprise.

"But perhaps you lead a very upright life," —began Mr. Finopléntoff,—"and so by way of reward . . . . " But at that word he faltered, for he saw that Porfíry Kapítonitch's cheeks were beginning to swell out and turn red, and his eyes too were beginning to pucker up—evidently the man was on the point of breaking out. . . .

"But admitting the possibility of the supernatural, the possibility of its interference in everyday life, so to speak,"—began Antón Stepánitch:—"then what rôle, after this, must sound sense play?"

None of us found any answer, and, as before, we remained perplexed.

# THE JEW

(1846)

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# THE JEW

"PRAY, tell us a story, Colonel," we said at last to Nikolái Ílitch. The Colonel smiled, emitted a stream of tobacco-smoke through his moustache, passed his hand over his grey hair, stared at us, and meditated. We all loved and respected Nikolái Ílitch extremely for his kind-heartedness, his sound sense, and his indulgence toward us youngsters. He was tall of stature, broad-shouldered, and corpulent. His swarthy face, "one of the glorious Russian faces," [1] his frank-spirited, clever gaze, his gentle smile, his manly and resonant voice—everything about him pleased and attracted.

"Well, then, listen,"—he began.

It happened in the year '13, before Dantzig. I was then serving in the E** cuirassier regiment, and, as I recall it, had just been promoted to the rank of cornet. 'T is a merry occupation,—fighting and marching,—a fine thing, but in the besieging force things were very dull. You sit all God's day in some lodgment or other, under a tent, in the mud or straw, and play cards

[1] Lermontoff, in "The Treasurer's Wife."

from morning till night. Perhaps, out of sheer tedium, you go out to take a look at the way the hot shot or the bombs are flying.

At first the French comforted us with sallies, but they soon quieted down. Riding on foraging expeditions got tiresome also; in a word, such boredom descended upon us that we were fit to howl. I was only in my nineteenth year then; I was a healthy youngster, with a complexion of blood and milk, and I thought I would amuse myself at the expense of the French, and at the expense of . . . . well, you understand . . . but this is what came of it. For lack of something to do, I took to gambling. One day, after losing frightfully, luck turned in my favour, and toward morning (we were playing by night), I had won heavily. Exhausted and sleepy, I emerged into the open air and sat down on the glacis. It was a magnificent, calm morning; the long lines of our fortifications were lost in the mist; I looked about me, then fell into a doze where I sat. A cautious cough awakened me; I opened my eyes and beheld before me a Jew, about forty years of age, in a long-skirted grey kaftan, shoes, and a black skull-cap. This Jew, Hirschel by name, was constantly haunting our camp, intruding himself on the agents, furnishing us with wine, edibles, and other trifles; he was small of stature, thin, pock-marked, and red-haired; he was incessantly winking his tiny

eyes, which were also red; he had a long, crooked nose, and was eternally coughing.

He began to wriggle about in front of me, and make low bows.

"Well, what dost thou want?"—I asked him at last.

"Why, sir, I came to inquire, sir, whether I could not supply their[1] Well-Born with something. . . ."

"I have no need of thee; begone."

"As you command, sir, as you like, sir. . . . I thought that, possibly, there was something, sir . . . ."

"Thou borest me; begone, I tell thee."

"Certainly, certainly, sir. But permit me to congratulate their Well-Born on their winnings. . . ."

"How dost thou know about that?"

"And why should n't I know, sir? . . . . Big winnings . . . . big. . . . Phew! how big! . . . ."

Hirschel spread out his fingers widely, and nodded his head.

"But what 's the good of it?"—I said with vexation.—"What the devil is the use of money here?"

"Oh, don't say that, your Well-Born; áï, áï, don't say that. Money is a good thing; 't is always useful; everything can be had for

[1] "Their" (instead "of your") Well-Born indicates profound respect. The Jew talks broken Russian.—TRANSLATOR.

money, your Well-Born,—everything, everything!"

"Stop lying, Jew!"

"Áï, áï!"—repeated Hirschel, shaking his ear-locks;—"their Well-Born does not believe me . . . áï . . . . áï . . . . áï. . . . " The Jew shut his eyes and slowly shook his head to the right and left. . . . "But I know what the Mr. Officer would like. . . . I know . . . . indeed I know!"

The Jew assumed a very cunning aspect. . . .

"Really?"

The Jew cast a timid glance about him, then bent toward me.

"Such a beauty, your Well-Born, such a beauty!" . . . Again Hirschel closed his eyes, and protruded his lips.—"Give the command, your Well-Born . . . you shall see for yourself . . . what I shall say now you will hear . . . . you will not believe it . . . . but you had better command me to show you . . . . that 's how, that 's what!"

I made no answer, and stared at the Jew.

"Well, good, then; well, that 's good; well now, I 'll show you. . . ." Here Hirschel burst out laughing and slapped me lightly on the shoulder, but immediately leaped back, as though he had been singed.

"Well, now, your Well-Born, how about a little deposit?"

"But thou wilt cheat me, or show me some scarecrow?"

"Áï, váï, what are you saying?"—exclaimed the Jew, with unwonted warmth, and flourishing his arms.—"How is it possible? But do you, your Well-Born . . . . command that I be given five hundred . . . . four hundred and fifty blows with a stick,"—he added hastily. . . "Do you give the command. . . ."

At that moment, one of my comrades raised the edge of the tent, and called me by name. I hastily rose, and tossed the Jew a ducat.

"This evening, this evening,"—he mumbled after me.

I must confess to you, gentlemen, that I awaited the evening with some impatience. On that same day the French made a sally; our regiment went to the attack. Evening drew on; we seated ourselves round the camp-fires . . . the soldiers cooked the buckwheat groats.—Discussions began. I lay on my *búrka,*[1] and listened to my comrades' tales. They proposed to me to play cards. I refused. I was in a state of agitation. Little by little the officers dispersed to their tents; the fires began to die out; the soldiers also had scattered, or fallen asleep on the spot; everything was quiet. I did not rise. My orderly was squatting on his heels before the

[1] A large Caucasian circular cloak, of heavy, impenetrable, shaggy felt.—TRANSLATOR.

fire and, as the saying is, "catching fish."—I drove him away. Soon the whole camp had grown silent. The watch made its round. The sentries were changed. I still lay there and waited for something. The stars came out. Night had come. For a long time I gazed at the expiring flame . . . . the last tiny spark died out at last. "The damned Jew has deceived me," I thought with vexation, and was on the point of rising. . . .

"Your Well-Born . . . ." whispered an anxious voice above my very ear.

I looked round: it was Hirschel. He was very pale, and stammered and lisped.

"Please go to your tent, sir."

I rose and followed him. The Jew was all shrunk together, and trod cautiously on the short, damp grass. I noticed on one side a motionless, muffled figure. The Jew waved his hand at it—it approached him. He whispered with it, turned to me, nodded his head several times, and all three of us entered the tent. Absurd to say, I was choking.

"Here, your Well-Born,"—whispered the Jew with an effort: "here. She 's a little frightened now, she 's frightened; but I have told her that the Mr. Officer is a good man, a fine man. . . . And thou must not be afraid, must not be afraid,"—he added,—"must not be afraid. . . ."

The muffled figure did not stir. I myself was

in a terrible state of confusion, and did not know what to say. Hirschel kept dancing up and down in one place, and throwing his hands apart in a strange sort of way. . . .

"But,"—I said to him, "leave the tent. . . ."

Hirschel obeyed with apparent unwillingness.

I stepped up to the muffled figure and gently removed the dark hood from its head. There was a conflagration in Dantzig; by the reddish, spasmodic and feeble reflection of the distant fire I beheld the pale face of a young Jewess. Her beauty startled me. I stood before her and gazed at her in silence. She did not raise her eyes. A faint rustle made me glance round. Hirschel was cautiously thrusting his head past the flap of the tent. I waved my hand at him in irritation . . . he disappeared.

"What is thy name?"—I said at last.

"Sara," she replied,—and for one instant the whites of her large, long eyes, and her little, even, gleaming teeth flashed in the gloom.

I seized two leather cushions, threw them on the ground, and asked her to sit down. She flung off her cloak and seated herself. She wore a short kazák jacket, open in front, with round, carved silver buttons, and wide sleeves. Her thick black braid of hair encircled her little head twice. I sat down beside her, and took her dark-skinned, slender hand. She resisted a little, but seemed to be afraid to look at me, and her breath

came unevenly. I admired her Oriental profile—and timidly pressed her cold, trembling fingers.

"Dost thou understand Russian?"

"Yes . . . a little."

"And dost thou love the Russians?"

"Yes, I do."

"So, then, thou lovest me?"

"Yes, I love you, also."

I tried to embrace her, but she hastily moved away. . . .

"No, no, please, master, please. . . ."

"Well, then, look at me, at least."

She fixed on me her black, piercing eyes, and immediately turned away with a smile and blushed.

I kissed her hand fervently. She cast a side-long glance at me, and broke into a soft laugh.

"What art thou laughing at?"

She covered her face with her sleeve and laughed more heartily than before. Hirschel made his appearance at the entrance to the tent, and shook his finger at her. She fell silent.

"Get out!" I whispered to him through my teeth.—"I 'm tired of thee!"

Hirschel did not withdraw.

I got a handful of ducats out of my chest, thrust them into his hand, and pushed him out.

"Give me some, too, master. . ." said she.

I tossed several ducats into her lap; she snatched them up nimbly, like a cat.

" Well, now I shall kiss thee."

" No, please, please,"—she lisped in a frightened and beseeching voice.

" What dost thou fear? "

" I 'm afraid."

" Come, enough of that. . . ."

" No, please. ."

She gazed timidly at me, bent her head a little on one side, and clasped her hands. I left her in peace.

" If thou wishest . . . here," she said, after a considerable pause, and raised her hand to my lips.

I kissed it not altogether willingly. Again Sara burst out laughing.

My blood choked me. I was vexed at myself and did not know what to do. " But," I thought at last, " what a fool I am! "

I turned to her again.

" Hearken, Sara, I 'm in love with thee."

" I know it."

" Thou knowest it? And thou art not angry? And dost thou love me? "

Sara nodded her head.

" No, answer me properly."

" Show yourself,"—said she.

I bent toward her. Sara laid her hands on my shoulders, began to scan my face, frowned, smiled. . . . I could not restrain myself and swiftly kissed her on the cheek. She sprang up,

and with one bound was at the entrance to the tent.

"Well, what a savage thou art!"

She made no reply, and did not stir from the spot.

"Come hither to me. . . ."

"No, master; farewell. Until another time."

Again Hirschel thrust in his little curly head and said a couple of words to her; she bent down and glided out like a serpent.

I rushed out of the tent after her, but saw neither her nor Hirschel.

All night long I could not get to sleep.

On the following morning we were sitting in the tent of our captain; I was gambling, but reluctantly. My orderly entered.

"Some one is asking for you, your Well-Born."

"Who wants me?"

"A Jew is asking for you."

"Can it be Hirschel?" I thought. I waited until the end of the deal, rose, and went out. In fact, I beheld Hirschel.

"Well,"—he asked me with a pleasant smile, "is your Well-Born satisfied?"

"Akh, devil take thee! . . ." (At this point the Colonel glanced round) ". . . I think there are no ladies present . . . however, never mind. Akh, damn thee, my dear fellow,"—I answered him; "art thou making game of me, pray?"

" Why so, sir? "

" What meanest thou by ' why so '? I should think thou wouldst ask! "

" Áï, áï, Mr. Officer, what a man you are,"—said Hirschel, reproachfully, but without ceasing to smile.—" The girl is young, modest . . . . you frightened her, really you frightened her."

" Fine modesty! Then why did she take the money? "

" And why not, sir? When money is offered, sir, why not take it? "

" Hark ye, Hirschel: let her come again; I will not let thee lose anything by it . . . only, be so good as not to show thy stupid phiz in my tent, and leave us in peace; hearest thou? "

Hirschel's eyes sparkled.

" Well? And does she please you? "

" Well, yes."

" A beauty! there 's no such beauty anywhere. And will you give me the money now? "

" Take it; only, hearken to me: an agreement is better than money. Fetch her, and take thyself off to the devil! I 'll conduct her home myself."

" But that is impossible, impossible, utterly impossible, sir,"—returned the Jew, hastily.—" Áï, áï, utterly impossible, sir. I will walk about near the tent, if you please, your Well-Born; I 'll—I 'll go a little way off, your Well-Born, if you like, . . . your Well-Born, I 'm ready to serve you;

I 'll go off a bit, if you please. . . . What say you to that? I 'll go off a bit."

" Well, see that thou dost. . . . But fetch her, hearest thou? "

" But she 's a beauty, is n't she, Mr. Officer? hey? Your Well-Born? A beauty? Hey? "

Hirschel bent forward, and gazed into my eyes.

" She 's very nice."

" Well, then, give me just one more little ducat. . . ."

I flung him a ducat; we parted.

The day came to an end at last. Night descended. For a long time I sat alone in my tent. The weather was overcast. The clock in the town struck two. I had already begun to curse the Jew . . . when, suddenly, Sara entered, alone. I sprang to my feet, embraced her . . . touched my lips to her face. . . . It was as cold as ice. I could barely distinguish her features. . . . I seated her, knelt down in front of her, took her hands, touched her waist. . . . She preserved silence, and did not stir, and suddenly burst out into loud, convulsive sobs. In vain did I strive to sooth her, to persuade her. . . . She sobbed and wept. . . . I caressed her, wiped away her tears; as before, she offered no resistance, did not reply to my questions, and wept, wept in torrents. My heart revolted within me; I rose and left the tent.

Hirschel ducked up in front of me, as though he had sprung out of the earth.

"Hirschel,"—I said to him,—"here is the money I promised thee. Take Sara away.

The Jew immediately rushed to her. She had ceased weeping, and clung to him.

"Good-bye, Sara," I said to her.—"God be with thee, farewell. We shall meet again some other time."

Hirschel maintained silence and saluted. Sara bent down, took my hand, and pressed it to her lips; I turned away. . . .

Five or six days, gentlemen, I thought of my Jewess. Hirschel did not make his appearance, and no one had seen him in the camp. At night I slept rather badly: I kept seeing visions of moist black eyes and long lashes; my lips could not forget the touch of that cheek, as smooth and fresh as the skin of a plum. I was sent with a detachment on a foraging expedition to a distant hamlet. While my soldiers were rummaging the houses I remained in the street, and did not alight from my horse. Suddenly, some one seized me by the foot. . . .

"Great heavens, Sara!"

She was pale and agitated.

"Mr. Officer, mister . . . . help, save, the soldiers are insulting us. . . . Mr. Officer . . . .

She recognised me, and flushed up.

"But dost thou live here?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

Sara pointed out to me a tiny, ancient house. I gave my horse the spur, and galloped thither. In the yard of the little house, a hideous, dishevelled Jewess was endeavouring to wrest from the hands of my long quartermaster, Silyávka, three chickens and a duck. He had raised his booty high above his head and was laughing; the chickens were cackling, the duck was quacking. . . . Two other cuirassiers had laden their horses with hay, straw, and flour-sacks. In the house itself, Little Russian exclamations and oaths were audible. . . . I shouted at my men and ordered them to leave the Jews in peace, to take nothing from them. The soldiers obeyed; the quartermaster mounted his brown mare, Proserpine, or, as he called her, "Prozherpyla," and rode out into the street in my wake.

"Well," I said to Sara,—"art thou satisfied with me?"

She looked at me with a smile.

"Where hast thou been hiding thyself all this time?"

She dropped her eyes.

"I will come to you to-morrow."

"In the evening?"

"No, sir, in the morning."

"See that thou dost not deceive me."

"No . . . . no, I will not deceive thee."

I gazed eagerly at her. By day she seemed to be even more beautiful. I remember that I was particularly struck with the dull amber tint of her face and the bluish reflections of her black hair. . . . I bent down from my horse, and pressed her little hand warmly.

"Farewell, Sara . . . see that thou comest."

"I will come."

She went home; I ordered my quartermaster to follow me with the detachment, and galloped off.

On the following day I rose very early and went out of my tent. It was a wondrously beautiful morning; the sun had only just risen, and a moist crimson light sparkled on every blade of grass. I mounted the high breastwork and seated myself on the edge of an embrasure. Beneath me a fat iron cannon thrust its black muzzle into the fields. I gazed absent-mindedly on all sides . . . . and suddenly beheld, about a hundred paces distant, a bent figure in a grey kaftan. I recognised Hirschel. He stood for a long time motionless in one spot, then suddenly ran off a little to one side, cast a hasty and timorous glance around him . . . grunted, squatted down, cautiously stretched out his neck, and again began to gaze about him, and to listen. I could see all his movements with perfect distinctness. He thrust his hand into his breast, drew out a scrap of paper and a pencil, and began to write or

sketch something. Hirschel kept incessantly pausing, quivering like a hare, attentively scanning his surroundings, and was apparently making a drawing of our camp. More than once he hid his paper, screwed up his eyes, sniffed the air, and again bent to his work. At last the Jew squatted down on the grass, took off his shoe, and thrust in the paper; but before he had managed to straighten himself up again, suddenly, ten paces from him, from behind the slope of the glacis, the moustached head of quartermaster Silyávka made its appearance, and gradually his whole long, clumsy body raised itself a little from the ground. The Jew was standing with his back to him. Silyávka walked briskly up to him and laid his heavy paw on his shoulder. Hirschel shrivelled up. He shook like a leaf, and emitted a wailing, hare-like cry. Silyávka spoke menacingly to him, and seized him by the collar. I could not hear their conversation, but from the despairing movements of the Jew's body, from his beseeching mien, I began to divine what the matter was. A couple of times the Jew flung himself at the quartermaster's feet, thrust his hand into his pocket, pulled out a tattered checked handkerchief, untied a knot in it, and got out a ducat. . . . Silyávka gravely accepted the gift, but did not cease to drag the Jew by the collar. Hirschel broke loose and darted to one side; the quartermaster set out in pursuit of

him. The Jew ran with extreme swiftness; his legs, clad in blue stockings, twinkled very fast indeed, in fact; but Silyávka, after two or three "spurts," caught the squatting Jew, lifted him up, and carried him in his arms straight toward the camp. I rose and went to meet him.

"Ah! your Well-Born!"—shouted Silyávka: "I 'm bringing you a spy,—a spy!" . . . The perspiration poured in streams from the face of the Little Russian.—"Come, stop that wriggling, thou devil's Jew! stop it, I say . . . damn thee! if thou dost not, I 'll crush thee—look out!"

The unhappy Hirschel pushed feebly with his elbows against Silyávka's breast, and feebly kicked his legs about. . . . His eyes rolled convulsively upward. . . .

"What 's the matter?"—I inquired of Silyávka.

"Why, here, your Well-Born: please to remove the shoe from his right foot,—it 's awkward for me."—He still held the Jew in his arms.

I removed the shoe, took out the carefully-folded bit of paper, unfolded it, and beheld a detailed sketch of our camp. On the margins stood numerous comments, written in a very fine script, in the Jewish tongue.

In the meantime, Silyávka had set the Jew on his legs. The Jew opened his eyes, saw me, and flung himself on his knees before me.

I silently showed him the paper.

"What 's this?"

"That is—just,—Mr. Officer. I just made that by chance."—His voice broke.

"Art thou a scout?"

He did not understand me, muttered incoherent words, and tremulously touched my knees. . . .

"Art thou a spy?"

"Áï!"—he cried faintly, and shook his head. —"How is that possible? I never was; I am nothing of the sort. I can't be; it is n't possible. I 'm ready. This instant. I 'll give money . . . . I 'll pay,"—he whispered, and closed his eyes.

His skull-cap had fallen back on his nape; his red hair, damp with cold sweat, hung in elf-locks; his lips had turned blue and were spasmodically contorted; his brows were painfully contracted; his cheeks were sunken. . . .

The soldiers surrounded us. At first I had felt like giving Hirschel a good fright, and ordering Silyávka to hold his tongue; but now the affair had become public, and could not be kept from the knowledge of the authorities.

"Conduct him to the General,"—I said to the quartermaster.

"Mr. Officer, your Well-Born!"—shrieked the Jew in a voice of despair:—"I am not guilty; I am not guilty. . . . Order them to release me, order . . . ."

"His Excellency will settle that,"—said Silyávka.—"Come along."

"Your Well-Born!"—the Jew screamed after me:—"give orders! have mercy!"

His shriek worried me. I hastened my steps.

Our General was a man of German extraction, honourable and kind-hearted, but a strict executor of the regulations of the service. I entered his small, hastily-built house, and in a few words explained to him the cause of my visit. I was familiar with all the strictness of the military regulations, and therefore did not even utter the word "spy," but endeavoured to represent the whole affair as unimportant, and not worth attention. But, unluckily for Hirschel, the General placed the fulfilment of duty above compassion.

"Young man,"—he said to me,—"you are inexperienced. You are, as yet, inexperienced in military affairs. The matter which[1] (the General was very fond of the word "which") you have reported to me is important, very important. . . . And where is that man who was captured? that Hebrew? Where is he?"

I went out of the tent, and ordered the Jew to be led in.

The Jew was led in. The unhappy wight could barely stand on his legs.

[1] The General pronounces it *kótóryi* instead of *kotóryi*.—TRANSLATOR.

"Yes,"—said the General, turning to me:—"and where is that plan which was found on this man?"

I handed him the paper. The General unfolded it, moved backward, puckered up his eyes, and contracted his brows in a frown.

"This is a-ma-zing . . . ." he said with pauses between the syllables.—"Who arrested him?"

"I, your Excellency!"—blurted out Silyávka, sharply.

"Ah! Good! good! . . . . Well, my good man, what hast thou to say in thine own defence?"

"Yo . . . yo . . . . your Excellency,"—stammered Hirschel:—"I . . . . pray . . . . your Excellency . . . . am not guilty . . . ask the Sir Officer if I am, your Excellency. . . . I 'm an agent, your Excellency, an honest agent."

"He must be cross-examined,"—said the General in a low voice, shaking his head pompously.—"Well, and what is thy plea, my good man?"

"Not guilty, your Excellency, not guilty."

"But that is incredible. Thou hast been caught deservedly, as the expression is in Russian—that is to say, in the very act!"

"Permit me to say, your Excellency, that I am not guilty."

"Didst thou draw the plan? Art thou a spy of the enemy?"

"Not I!"—cried Hirschel, suddenly:—"not I, your Excellency!"

The General glanced at Silyávka.

"Why, he 's lying, your Excellency. The Sir Officer got the document out of his shoe himself."

The General looked at me. I was compelled to nod my head.

"Thou art a scout of the enemy, my good man, . . . . my good man. . . ."

"Not I. . . . Not I . . . ." whispered the distracted Jew.

"Thou hast already furnished the enemy with similar information? Confess. . . ."

"How is that possible!"

"Thou shalt not deceive me, my good man. Art thou a scout?"

The Jew shut his eyes, shook his head, and raised the skirts of his kaftan.

"Hang him,"—said the General expressively, after a brief pause,—"in accordance with the laws. Where is Mr. Feódor Schlikelmann?"

They ran for Schlikelmann, the General's adjutant. Hirschel turned green, his mouth fell open, his eyes protruded. The adjutant presented himself. The General gave him the requisite instructions. The regimental secretary showed his gaunt, pock-marked face for a moment. Two or three officers looked into the room out of curiosity.

"Have mercy, your Excellency,"—I said to the General in German, to the best of my ability: —"release him. . . ."

"You, young man,"—he replied to me in Russian,—"you are inexperienced, as I have already told you, and therefore I beg that you will hold your peace, and not trouble me further."

Hirschel flung himself with a shriek at the General's feet.

"Your Excellency, have mercy, I won't do it again—I won't, your Excellency, I have a wife . . . . your Excellency, I have a daughter . . . . have mercy. . . ."

"What can I do?"

"I be guilty, your Excellency, I be really guilty . . . . for the first time, your Excellency, for the first time, believe me!"

"Thou hast not furnished any other papers?"

"For the first time, your Excellency . . . . a wife . . . children . . . . have mercy. . . ."

"But thou art a spy."

"A wife . . . . your Excellency . . . . children. . . ."

It was very distasteful to the General, but there was no way out of it.

"In accordance with the laws the Jew must be hanged,"—he said slowly and with the aspect of a man who is forced, reluctantly, to sacrifice his better feelings to inexorable duty.—"He must

hang! Feódor Kárlitch, I request that you will write a report of these proceedings, which . . . ."

A strange change suddenly came over Hirschel. In place of the tremulous fear peculiar to the Jew, the terrible agony which precedes death was depicted on his countenance. He flung himself about like a captured wild animal, opened his mouth, rattled dully in his throat, even leaped up and down on the spot, convulsively flourishing his elbows. He had but one shoe on; they had forgotten to restore the other to his foot; . . . the breast of his kaftan flew open . . . his skull-cap fell off. . .

We all shuddered; the General remained silent.

" Your Excellency,"—I began again:—" pardon this unhappy man."

" Impossible. The law enjoins,"—returned the General abruptly, and not without emotion: —" he will serve as an example to others."

" For God's sake. . . ."

" Mr. Cornet, be so good as to go to your post," —said the General, and pointed me to the door with a commanding gesture.

I saluted and retired. But as I had no actual post anywhere, I halted at a short distance from the General's little house.

Two minutes later, Hirschel made his appearance accompanied by Silyávka and three soldiers. The poor Jew was in a state of stupor, and could barely move his legs. Silyávka passed me on his

way to the camp, and speedily returned with a rope in his hands. Strange, harsh compassion was portrayed on his coarse but not malicious face. At the sight of the rope, the Jew dropped his hands in despair, squatted down, and began to sob. The soldiers stood in silence around him, and stared grimly at the ground. I stepped up to Hirschel, and spoke to him; he was sobbing like a child, and did not even look at me. I waved my hand, went off to my own quarters, flung myself on my bed, and closed my eyes. . . .

Suddenly some one ran hastily and noisily into my tent. I raised my head and beheld Sara. She seemed wild with fright. She darted toward me, and seized my hands.

"Come, come, come,"—she repeated, in a panting voice.

"Whither? Why? Let us remain here."

"To father, to father, be quick . . . . save him . . . . save him!"

"To what father?"

"To my father; they are going to hang him. . . ."

"What! Is it possible that Hirschel . . . ."

"He is my father. . . . I will explain everything to thee afterward,"—she added, wringing her hands in despair:—"only come . . . . come. . . ."

We ran out of the tent. In the field, on the road to a solitary birch-tree, a group of soldiers

was visible. . . . Sara pointed dumbly at it with her finger. . . .

"Stop!"—I said suddenly:—"whither are we running? The soldiers will not obey me."

Sara continued to drag me after her. . . . I must confess that my head reeled.

"But hearken, Sara," I said to her: "what 's the sense in running thither? I had better go once more to the General; let us go together; perhaps we can move him by entreaties."

Sara suddenly paused and stared at me like a mad creature.

"Understand me, Sara, for God's sake! I have not the power to pardon thy father, but the General can. Let us go to him."

"But in the meanwhile they will hang him,"—she moaned. . . .

I glanced round. The regimental secretary stood not far off.

"Ivánoff," I said to him:—"run, please, to the men yonder: order them to wait; say that I have gone to entreat the General."

"I obey, sir."

Ivánoff hastened off.

They would not admit us to the General's presence. In vain did I plead, and argue, at last even swear . . . . in vain did poor Sara tear her hair and fling herself upon the sentries: we were not admitted.

Sara gazed wildly about her, clutched her head

in both hands, and ran headlong across the field to her father. I ran after her. People stared at us in amazement. . . .

We hurried up to the soldiers. They were standing in a circle, and—just imagine, gentlemen, were jeering at poor Hirschel! I flared up, and shouted at them. The Jew caught sight of us, and flung himself on his daughter's neck. Sara clasped him convulsively.

The poor man imagined that he had been pardoned. . . . He had already begun to thank me. . . . I turned away.

"Your Well-Born,"—he shouted, and clasped his hands tightly,—"am not I pardoned?"

I made no reply.

"No?"

"No."

"Your Well-Born,"—he mumbled:—"look, your Well-Born, look . . . . for she—this young maiden here—you know—she is my daughter."

"I know,"—I answered, and again turned away.

"Your Well-Born!"—he screamed:—"I did n't go away from the tent! I would n't, for anything. . . ." He paused and shut his eyes for a moment. . . . "I wanted your money, your Well-Born, I must confess, your money . . . . but I would n't for anything . . . ."

I preserved silence. Hirschel was repulsive to me—yes, and she was his accomplice. . . .

" But now, if you will save me,"—said the Jew in a whisper,—" I will command—I . . . . you understand? . . . everything . . . . I 'll do anything. . . ."

He trembled like a leaf, and cast a hasty glance about him. Sara embraced him silently and passionately.

The adjutant stepped up to them.

" Mr. Cornet,"—he said to me:—" his Excellency has given orders to arrest you. And you . . . ." he silently pointed out the Jew to the soldiers . . . . " will immediately . . . ."

Silyávka approached the Jew.

" Feódor Kárlitch,"—I said to the adjutant (five soldiers had come with him) :—" pray, give orders, at least, that this poor girl shall be removed. . . ."

" Of course. I agree, sir."

The unhappy girl was barely breathing. Hirschel muttered something in her ear, in the Jewish tongue. . . .

With difficulty the soldiers freed Sara from the paternal embrace, and carefully carried her off about twenty paces. But she suddenly wrested herself from their hands, and darted toward Hirschel . . . . Silyávka stopped her. Sara thrust him aside; a slight flush covered her face, her eyes flashed, she extended her arms.

" Then may you be accursed,"—she shrieked in German:—" accursed, thrice accursed, you and

all your hateful race, with the curse of Dathan and Abiram, with the curse of poverty, of sterility and impotence, of shameful death! May the earth also yawn beneath your feet, ye godless ones, ye pitiless, bloodthirsty dogs. . . ."

Her head fell backward . . . . she sank to the ground. . . . They lifted her and bore her away.

The soldiers took Hirschel under the arms. Then I understood why they had laughed at the Jew while Sara and I had run in from the camp. He really was ridiculous, in spite of all the horror of his situation. The torturing anguish of parting from life, from his daughter, from his family was expressed in the case of the unhappy Jew by such strange, hideous contortions of body, by such shrieks and skips, that we all smiled involuntarily, although it was painful, very painful to us. The poor man was expiring with terror. . . .

"Óï, óï, óï!"—he screamed:—"óï . . . . stop! I will tell . . . I will tell much. Mr. Assistant Quartermaster, you know me. I am an agent, an honest agent. Don't seize me; wait a minute more, one little minute, one tiny little minute—wait! Let me go: I am a poor Jew. Sara . . . . where is Sara? Oh, I know! She is with the Mr. Quarter-Lieutenant" (heaven knows why he promoted me to such an unheard-of rank). "Mr. Quarter-Lieutenant! I won't leave the tent!"

(The soldiers tried to take hold of Hirschel . . . he squealed in a deafening manner, and slipped through their hands.) —" Your Excellency! . . . have mercy on an unhappy father of a family! I will give you ten ducats, fifteen ducats, your Excellency! . . ." (They dragged him to the birch-tree) . . . . " Spare me! zhow merzy! Mr. Quarter-Lieutenant! Your Illustriousness! Mr. Over-General and Commander-in-Chief! "

They placed the noose on the Jew's neck . . . . I shut my eyes and set off on a run.

I sat under arrest for a fortnight. I was told that the widow of the unlucky Hirschel had come for the clothing of the dead man. The General ordered one hundred rubles to be given to her. I never saw Sara again. I was wounded; I was sent to the hospital, and when I recovered, Dantzig had already surrendered,—and I overtook my regiment on the banks of the Rhine.

# ANDRÉI KÓLOSOFF

(1844)

# ANDRÉI KÓLOSOFF

IN a small, passably-well furnished room, several young men were sitting in front of the fireplace. The winter evening was only just beginning: the samovár was boiling on the table; conversation had got well under way, and was passing from one topic to another. They had begun to talk about remarkable people, and about the precise manner in which they differ from ordinary people. Each one expressed his opinion as best he might; voices were raised, and had begun to grow noisy. One small, pale man, who had listened for a long time, as he sipped his tea and smoked his small cigar, to the idle chatter of his companions, suddenly rose to his feet and addressed all of us (I also was among the number of the disputants) in the following words:

"Gentlemen! all your profound speeches are good in their way, but futile. Each, as usual, learns the opinion of his opponent, and each one sticks to his own conviction. But this is not the first time we have come together, this is not the first time we have had a discussion, and, therefore, in all probability, we have all managed to

enunciate our views, and to find out the opinions of the others. Then what are you making such a fuss about?"

So saying, the small man carelessly knocked the ashes from his cigar into the fireplace, screwed up his eyes, and smiled calmly. We all fell silent.

"Then what ought we to do, in your opinion?" —said one of us:—"play cards? go to bed? disperse to our homes?"

"It is pleasant to play cards, and useful to sleep,"—retorted the small man:—"but it is still rather early to disperse to our homes. But you have not understood me. Hearken: I propose that each one of us, things being as they are, should describe to us some extraordinary individual, should narrate to us his encounter with some notable man. Believe me, the very worst story is far more to the point than the most capital argument."

We reflected.

"It is strange,"—remarked one of us, a great joker,—"that, with the exception of myself, I am not acquainted with a single remarkable man, and my life is well known to all of you, I believe. However, if you command. . . ."

"No,"—exclaimed another:—"we don't want that! But come,"—he added, addressing the small man:—"do thou begin. Thou hast disconcerted us all; thou art the most competent

person. Only, look out—if thy story does not please us, we shall hiss thee."

"All right,"—he replied.

He took up his stand by the fireplace; we seated ourselves around him, and became quiet. The small man looked at all of us, cast a glance at the ceiling, and began as follows:

TEN years ago, my dear sirs, I was a student in Moscow. My father, a virtuous landed proprietor of the steppes, put me in the hands of a retired German professor, who undertook, for a consideration of one hundred rubles a month, to provide me with food and drink, and to look after my morals. This German was gifted with an extremely pompous and stately mien; at first I was a good deal afraid of him. But one fine evening, on returning home, to my inexpressible delight I beheld my tutor sitting with three or four comrades at a round table, on which stood a considerable number of empty bottles and half-emptied glasses. On catching sight of me, my respected tutor rose and, with flourishing of the hands and hiccoughs, presented me to the honourable company, which immediately and unanimously offered me a glass of punch. This agreeable spectacle had a refreshing effect on my soul; my future presented itself to me in the most attractive shape. And, in fact, thenceforward, beginning with that memorable day, I enjoyed un-

limited liberty, and did pretty much everything except thrash my tutor. He had a wife, who eternally reeked of smoke and cucumber brine; she was still fairly young, but no longer had a single front tooth. It is a well-known fact that all German women speedily lose that indispensable adornment of the human body. I mention her solely because she fell passionately in love with me, and stuffed me so with food that I nearly died.

"Come to the point, come to the point!"—we all shouted.—"Surely, thou dost not intend to narrate to us thine own adventures?"

"No, gentlemen!"—replied the small man with composure:—"I am an ordinary mortal."

So, as I was saying, I lived with my German like a fighting-cock, as the saying is. I did not attend the university too diligently, and at home did absolutely nothing. In a very short time I had made the acquaintance of all my comrades, and called them all "thou." Among the number of my new friends was one, a tolerably nice, good young fellow, the son of a former police captain. His name was Bóboff. This Bóboff got into the habit of coming to see me and, apparently, took a liking to me. And I . . . you know, did not exactly like him, or yet exactly dislike him, only in a sort of way. . . . I must tell you, that in all

Moscow I had not a single relation, with the exception of an old uncle, who sometimes asked me for money. I went nowhere, and was particularly afraid of women; I also avoided the acquaintance of the relations of my university comrades, after one of those relations had pulled his son's hair in my presence because a button had got ripped off his uniform, while there were not more than six buttons on my coat that day. In comparison with many of my comrades I passed for a rich man; from time to time my father sent me small packages of faded blue bank-bills,[1] and therefore I not only enjoyed independence, but I always had flatterers and toadies .... what am I saying? I had? Why, even my bob-tailed dog Armíshka, which, in spite of its setter pedigree, was so afraid of a shot that the mere sight of a gun inspired it with indescribable melancholy—even Armíshka had them! Moreover I, like every other young man, was not exempt from that dull, internal ferment which generally, after having broken out in a dozen more or less crude poems, comes to a very safe and peaceable end. I wanted something, strove toward something, and dreamed of something; I admit that I did not know very clearly at the time precisely of what I was dreaming. Now I understand what I missed:—I felt my loneliness, I *thirsted* for intercourse with so-called live people; the word

[1] The old five-ruble note was blue.—TRANSLATOR.

" life " (pronounce it *laife*) resounded in my soul, and I listened to that sound with ill-defined distress. . . .

" Valerián Nikítitch, please give me a cigar." [1]

Having lighted his cigar, the small man continued:

One fine morning, Bóboff rushed panting to me:—" Great news, brother, dost thou know it? Kólosoff has arrived."—" Kólosoff? what sort of a bird is Mr. Kólosoff?"—" Dost not thou know him? Andriúsha Kólosoff? Come on, my dear fellow, let 's go to him as quickly as possible. He returned yesterday evening from an engagement as tutor in a private family."—" But who is he?"—" A remarkable man, my dear fellow, good gracious!"—" A remarkable man,"—said I:—" thou mayest go alone. I 'll stay at home. I know all about your remarkable men! Some half-inebriated rhymster with an eternal rapturous smile!" . . . . —" Eh, no! Kólosoff is not that sort of a man." I wanted to remark to Bóboff that Mr. Kólosoff ought to call upon me; but, I know not why, I obeyed Bóboff and went. Bóboff conducted me to one of the filthiest, crookedest, and narrowest alleys in Moscow. . . . The house in which Kólosoff lived was built after an ancient pattern, artfully and inconve-

[1] A *pakhitós*, or cigar, with a corn-shuck wrapper. —TRANSLATOR.

niently. We entered the courtyard; a fat woman was hanging out clothes on a line stretched from the house to the fence . . . . children were shouting to one another on the wooden staircase. . . .

"Come to the point! come to the point!"—we roared.

"I see, gentlemen, that you do not like the agreeable, and cling exclusively to the useful. All right!"

We made our way through a dark and narrow passage to Kólosoff's chamber; we entered. You have, probably, an approximate idea of what the room of a poor student is like. Directly in front of the door, on a chest of drawers, sat Kólosoff, smoking a pipe. He extended his hand to Bóboff in friendly wise, and bowed politely to me. I glanced at Kólosoff, and at once felt irresistibly attracted to him. Gentlemen! Bóboff was not mistaken: Kólosoff really was a remarkable man. Allow me to describe him to you somewhat more in detail. . . . He was rather tall of stature, well built, alert, and very far from uncomely. His face . . . . I find it very difficult, gentlemen, to describe any one's face. It is easy enough to enumerate all the separate features; but how impart to another person that which constitutes the distinguishing attribute, the essence, in fact, of *that* face?

"That which Byron calls 'the music of the face,'"—remarked one pale, tightly-girt gentleman.

"Exactly, sir. . . ."

Therefore, I will confine myself to one comment: that peculiar "something," to which I have just alluded, consisted, in Kólosoff's case, of a recklessly jovial and dashing expression of countenance, and of an extremely fascinating smile. He had no recollection of his parents; he had been reared in the most economical way in the house of some distant relation, who was turned out of the government service for taking bribes. Until the age of fifteen he had lived in the country; then Fate brought him to Moscow, to the house of a deaf old priest's widow. He remained with her two years, entered the university, and began to live by giving lessons. He taught history, geography, and Russian grammar, although he had but a faint conception of those sciences; but, in the first place, we have instituted in Russia "guides," which are very useful for teachers, and, in the second place, the requirements of the respected merchants, who entrusted the education of their children to Kólosoff, were too circumscribed.

Kólosoff was neither a wit nor a humorist; but you cannot imagine, gentlemen, how willingly we all obeyed that man. We involuntarily ad-

mired him, as it were; his words, his glances, his movements exhaled such youthful charm that all of his comrades were over head and ears in love with him. The professors regarded him as a far from stupid young fellow, but "not possessed of great capacity," and lazy. Kólosoff's presence lent special orderliness to our evening gatherings: in his presence our merriment never passed over into outrageous turbulence; if we had all grown sad, that half-childish sadness was dissipated, in his presence, in a quiet, sometimes quite practical conversation, and never became converted into spleen. You smile, gentlemen,—I understand your smile: it is a fact that, later on, many of us turned out decidedly commonplace persons. But youth . . . . youth . . . .

"O talk not to me of a name great in story!
The days of our youth are the days of our glory. . . ."

remarked the pale man who had spoken before.

"Devil take it, what a memory you have! and you always quote from Byron!"—remarked the narrator.

In a word, gentlemen, Kólosoff was the soul of our society. I became more strongly attached to him than I have ever since been to any woman. And yet, I am not ashamed, even now, to recall that strange love—precisely that, love,—because, as I remember, I experienced

at that time all the torments of that passion—jealousy, for instance. Kólosoff loved us all equally, but he favoured in particular a taciturn, fair-haired, submissive young fellow, Gavríloff by name. He was hardly ever parted from that Gavríloff; he frequently exchanged whispers with him, and in company with him used to disappear from Moscow, God knows whither, for two or three days at a time. . . . Kólosoff did not like to be questioned, and I lost myself in conjectures. It was not simple curiosity which agitated me; I wanted to become Kólosoff's comrade, his squire; I was jealous of Gavríloff; I envied him. I could not possibly explain to myself the cause of Kólosoff's strange absences. Yet he had none of that mystery about him whereon youths endowed with self-conceit, pallor, black hair, and an " expressive " glance are wont to plume themselves, nor any of that fictitious indifference, beneath which vast powers are supposed to be concealed; no: he was entirely above-board, as the saying is; but when passion took possession of him, a vehement, impetuous activity made its appearance. Only, he did not waste his strength in vain; never, under any circumstances whatever, became stilted. By the way, gentlemen . . . . tell the truth: has it not happened to you to sit and smoke your pipe with a mournfully-majestic aspect, as though you had just decided upon some grand feat, while you are sim-

ply revolving in your mind what colour your new trousers shall be? . . . . But the point is, that I was the first to observe in the cheery and cordial Kólosoff these involuntary, passionate impulses. . . . Not without cause is it said that love is penetrating. I made up my mind—cost what it might—to worm myself into his confidence. I had no object in dangling after Kólosoff; I worshipped him in so childish a manner that he could not cherish any doubt as to my devotion . . . . but, to my indescribable vexation, I was forced at last to the conviction that Kólosoff avoided more intimate relations with me, that he found my unsolicited affection oppressive. On one occasion, with obvious displeasure, he asked me to lend him some money—and on the following day he repaid it with derisive gratitude. During the course of the entire winter, my relations with Kólosoff did not undergo so much as a hair's-breadth of change; I often compared myself with Gavríloff—and could not understand how he was better than I. . . . . But all of a sudden everything was changed. In the middle of April Gavríloff fell ill and died in the arms of Kólosoff, who had not left his chamber for a single instant, and went nowhere for a whole week after his death. We all grieved for poor Gavríloff. That pale, taciturn man seemed to have had a presentiment of his end. I, also, sincerely regretted his loss, but

my heart sank within me, and waited for something. . . . On one never-to-be-forgotten evening . . . . I was lying alone on my divan and staring senselessly at the ceiling . . . . when some one hastily threw open the door of my room and halted on the threshold; I raised my head: before me stood Kólosoff. He entered slowly and sat down beside me.—" I have come to thee," —he began, in a decidedly dull voice, " because thou lovest me more than all the others. . . . I have lost my best friend "—his voice trembled slightly—" and I feel lonely. . . . None of you knew Gavríloff . . . . you did not know him." . . . He rose, strode about the room and swiftly approached me. . . . " Wouldst thou like to take his place with me? " he said, and gave me his hand. I sprang to my feet, and flung myself on his breast. My genuine joy touched him. . . . I did not know what to say; I sighed. . . . Kólosoff gazed at me and laughed softly. Tea was served. After tea he began to talk about Gavríloff; I learned that that timid and gentle lad had saved Kólosoff's life; and I was obliged to admit to myself that, had I been in Gavríloff's place, I could not have refrained from chattering —from boasting of my good luck. The clock struck eight. Kólosoff rose, went to the window, drummed on the glass, turned swiftly toward me, tried to say something . . . . and sat down silently on a chair. I took his hand.—" Kólosoff!

really, really, I deserve thy confidence!"—He looked me straight in the eye.—"Well, if that is so," he said at last,—"take thy cap, and let us go."—"Whither?"—"Gavríloff was not wont to ask me."—I instantly fell silent.—"Dost thou know how to play cards?"—"Yes."

We left the house, hired a cab for the *** gate. At the gate we alighted. Kólosoff walked in advance very swiftly; I followed him. We proceeded along the highway. After traversing a verst,[1] Kólosoff turned aside. In the meantime, night had descended. On the right, athwart the mist, the lights twinkled, and the innumerable churches of the great city reared themselves aloft; on the left, by the side of a forest, two white horses were grazing in a meadow; in front of us stretched fields covered with greyish exhalations. I walked in silence behind Kólosoff. Suddenly he halted, extended his hand in front of him, and said: "Yonder is the place to which we are bound." I descried a small, dark house; two tiny windows glimmered faintly through the fog. "In that house," pursued Kólosoff, "dwells a certain Sidorénko, a retired lieutenant, with his sister, an old maid—and his daughter. I will give thee out as my relation—thou wilt sit down and play cards with them." I silently nodded my head. I wanted to prove to Kólosoff that I could hold my tongue quite as

[1] Two thirds of a mile.—TRANSLATOR.

effectually as Gavríloff. . . . But, I must confess, I was powerfully tormented with curiosity. On reaching the porch of the little house, I perceived in the lighted window the graceful form of a young girl. . . . She seemed to be watching for us, and immediately disappeared. We entered a dark, cramped anteroom. A crooked, hunchbacked little old woman emerged to receive us, and stared at me in surprise. "Is Iván Semyónitch at home?" asked Kólosoff. "Yes, sir."—"Yes, I 'm at home!" rang out a thick, masculine voice from the other side of the door. We passed on into the hall,[1] if a long, fairly dirty room can be called a hall, where a tall, ancient piano cowered submissively in a corner near the stove; several chairs were ranged along the walls, which had once been yellow. In the middle of the room stood a man of fifty, tall of stature, stooping, and clad in a greasy dressing-gown. I took a more attentive look at him; his face was surly, his hair was worn in a brush, his forehead was low, he had grey eyes, a huge moustache, thick lips. . . .

"'T is a fine goose!" I said to myself.

"We have n't seen you for a long time, Andréi Nikoláitch," he said, stretching out to Kólosoff his hideous red hand—"for a long time! And where is Sevastyán Sevastyánovitch?"

[1] A "hall" in Russian houses is a combination music- and ball-room, which is also sometimes used as a dining-room, and a play-room in bad weather.—TRANSLATOR.

"Gavríloff is dead," answered Kólosoff, sadly.

"Dead! just think of that! And who is this?"

"A relation of mine—I have the honour to introduce him:—Nikolái Alex. . . . ."

"Good, good," Iván Semyónitch interrupted him:—"I 'm glad, very glad to make his acquaintance. And does he play cards?"

"Yes, of course he does!"

"Well, that 's fine; we 'll sit down at once. Hey, there! Matryóna Semyónovna—where art thou? Fetch the card-table—and be quick about it! . . . . And tea!"

With these words, Mr. Sidorénko went into the next room. Kólosoff looked at me.—"Hearken," said he: "God knows how ashamed I am!" . . . . I shut his mouth with my hand.

"Well, my dear fellow—what 's your name?—please come hither," shouted Iván Semyónitch. I went into the drawing-room. It was even smaller than the dining-room. On the walls hung some hideous portraits; in front of the divan, from which the shredded linden-bast stuffing projected in several places, stood a green table; on the divan sat Iván Semyónitch, already engaged in shuffling the cards; by his side, on the extreme edge of an arm-chair, sat a raw-boned woman in a white mob-cap and a black gown, with a sallow, wrinkled face, tiny blear eyes, and thin, cat-like lips.

"Here,"—said Iván Semyónitch, "let me introduce this man! the former one is dead; Andréi Nikoláitch has brought another; let us see how he plays!"—The old woman made an awkward bow, and indulged in a fit of coughing. I cast a glance about me; Kólosoff was no longer in the room.—"Stop that coughing, Matryóna Semyónovna—sheep cough,"—growled Sidorénko. I sat down; the game began. Mr. Sidorénko flew into a frightful passion and raged at the smallest mistake on my part; he showered reproaches on his sister; but she, evidently, had succeeded in getting used to her brother's amiable remarks, and merely blinked her eyes. When, however, he declared to Matryóna Semyónovna that she was "antichrist" the poor old woman flared up.

"You were the death of your spouse, Anfísa Kárpovna, Iván Semyónitch," she said angrily; "but you sha'n't be the death of me!"

"You don't say so?"

"No; you sha'n't!"

"You don't say so?"

"No; you sha'n't be the death of me!"

They continued to wrangle after this fashion for quite a long time. My position, as you will please to observe, was not only not enviable, but even simply stupid; I did not understand why Kólosoff had taken it into his head to bring me. . . . . I had never been a good player; but on

this occasion I was conscious that I was so bad as to be beneath criticism.

"No!" the retired lieutenant kept incessantly repeating:—"you are far inferior to Sevastyánitch! No, you are playing heedlessly!"—Of course, I inwardly consigned him to all the fiends. This torture lasted for two hours; they stripped me of every kopék. Just before the end of the last rubber, I heard a faint sound behind my chair,—glanced round, and beheld Kólosoff; by his side stood a young girl of seventeen, gazing at me with a barely perceptible smile.—"Fill my pipe, Várya,"—said Iván Semyónitch. The girl immediately fluttered off into the next room. She was not very pretty, was quite pale and thin; but neither before nor since have I ever seen such eyes or such hair. We played the rubber out, after a fashion; I paid up. Sidorénko lighted his pipe, and roared:

"Well, now 't is time to sup!"

Kólosoff presented me to Várya, that is, to Varvára Ivánovna, the daughter of Iván Semyónitch. Várya was embarrassed; and I was embarrassed. But Kólosoff, according to his wont, brought everything and everybody into order in a few moments: he seated Várya at the piano, requested her to play a dance-tune, and began to vie with Iván Semyónitch in executing a kazák dance. The lieutenant shouted, stamped, and executed with his feet such incredible steps

that Matryóna Semyónovna herself shrieked with laughter, and went off to her own room upstairs. The hunchbacked woman set the table; we sat down to supper. After supper, Kólosoff narrated various nonsensical things; the lieutenant laughed deafeningly; I surveyed Várya from the corners of my eyes. She never took her eyes from Kólosoff . . . . and merely from the expression of her face I was able to divine that she loved him, and was beloved by him. Her lips were slightly parted, her head drooped slightly forward, a faint blush played over her whole countenance; from time to time she heaved a profound sigh, suddenly dropped her eyes, and laughed softly. . . . I rejoiced for Kólosoff. . . . And yet I was envious, devil take it! . . . . After supper, Kólosoff and I immediately took our caps, which, however, did not in the least prevent the lieutenant's saying to us, yawning the while:—"You have stayed too long, gentlemen; 't is time for you to cease abusing our kindness." Várya escorted Kólosoff to the anteroom.—"When will you come again, Andréi Nikoláevitch?" she whispered to him.

"A few days hence, without fail."

"Bring him too," she added, with a very artful smile.

"Certainly, certainly. . . . ."

"No, I thank you!" I said to myself. . . .

On our way home, I learned the following.

Six months previously, Kólosoff had made the acquaintance of Mr. Sidorénko in a decidedly strange manner. One rainy evening, Kólosoff was returning home from hunting, and was already nearing the *** gate, when suddenly, at a short distance from the road, he heard groans, interspersed with oaths. He had his gun with him: without pausing long to reflect, he bent his steps straight toward the shouts, and found on the ground a man with a sprained ankle. This man was Mr. Sidorénko. With great difficulty he led him home, and entrusted him to the care of his frightened sister and daughter, then ran for a doctor. . . . In the meanwhile, morning had come; Kólosoff could hardly stand on his feet from fatigue. With the permission of Matryóna Semyónovna, he threw himself on the divan in the drawing-room, and slept until eight o'clock. On awakening, he wished to set off homeward immediately; but they detained him, and gave him tea. During the night he had succeeded in catching two fleeting glimpses of Varvára Ivánovna's pale little face; he paid no special attention to her, but in the morning he took a decided liking to her. Matryóna Semyónovna loquaciously lauded and thanked Kólosoff; Várya sat silent, pouring out the tea, rarely cast a glance at him, and handed him now a cup, now the cream, now the sugar-bowl, with timid and bashful attentiveness. At that time the lieutenant

awoke, in a loud voice demanded his pipe, and after having held his peace for a while, began to shout: "Sister! hey, there, sister!" Matryóna went to him in his bedroom.—"Well, has that fellow . . . . what 's his name? the devil only knows! —has he gone?"—"No, I am still here," replied Kólosoff, stepping to the door:—"are you better now?"—"Yes," replied the lieutenant:—"come here, my dear fellow." Kólosoff entered. Sidorénko stared at him, and said reluctantly: "Well, thanks; drop in and see me some time or other—what 's your name, damn it?"—"Kólosoff," replied Andréi.—"Well, good, good, drop in; and now there 's no use in your hanging on here; they 're expecting you at home, I suppose."—Kólosoff left the room, took leave of Matryóna Semyónovna, made his bow to Varvára Ivánovna, and returned home. From that day forth he began to go to Iván Semyónitch's house; at first rarely, then more and more frequently. The summer arrived: he would take his gun, put on his game-bag, and set off as though for the chase; he would drop in to see the retired lieutenant—and sit there until evening.

Varvára Ivánovna's father had served for five-and-twenty years in the army, had accumulated a little money, and bought himself a few desyatínas [1] of land a couple of versts from Moscow. He was barely able to read and write; but,

[1] A desyatína equals 2.70 acres. —Translator.

despite his outward clumsiness and coarseness, he was intelligent and crafty, and even somewhat of a knave at times, like many Little Russians. He was a frightful egoist, stubborn as a bull, and, taken as a whole, far from amiable, especially with strangers; I even had occasion to note in him something akin to scorn for the whole human race. He denied himself nothing, like a spoiled child, did not care a rap for anybody, and lived "at his ease." He and I once fell into conversation about marriages in general. "Marriage . . . . marriage," said he:—"well, to whom shall I marry my girl, damn it? well, and what for? That her mean little husband may beat her, as I used to beat my deceased wife? And then, what do I make by it?" Such was retired lieutenant Iván Semyónitch. Kólosoff frequented his house, not on his account, of course, but for the sake of his daughter. One fine evening, Andréi was sitting in the garden with her, and chatting about something or other. Iván Semyónitch approached them, cast a glum look at Várya, and called Andréi to one side. "Hearken, my good fellow," he said to him, "I perceive that thou findest it agreeable to chatter with my only-begotten; but it is dull for me, the old man. Just bring some one with thee, otherwise I shall have no one with whom to toss the cards about; dost hear me? I won't admit thee if thou comest alone." On the following day Kólosoff presented

himself with Gavríloff, and poor Sevastyán Sevastyánitch played cards every evening during the autumn and winter with the retired lieutenant; and that worthy man treated him without ceremony, as the saying is; in other words, very roughly. And now, gentlemen, you have probably comprehended why Kólosoff, after Gavríloff's death, took me with him to Iván Semyónitch's. Having communicated to me these particulars, Kólosoff added: "I love Várya; she is a very charming girl; she has taken a liking to thee."

I think I have forgotten to inform you, my dear sirs, that up to that time I had been afraid of women and had shunned them, although it did happen that when I was alone I dreamed for hours at a time of trysts, of love, of mutual love, and so forth. Varvára Ivánovna was the first young girl with whom necessity had forced me to speak,—precisely that, necessity. Várya was an ordinary girl,—and yet, there are very few such girls in holy Russia. You ask me, "Why?" Because I never observed in her anything stiff, unnatural, affected; because she was a simple, frank, somewhat melancholy creature; because she could not be called "a young lady." I liked her quiet smile; I liked her artlessly-ringing voice, her light and merry laugh, her intent, though not in the least "profound" glances. This child promised nothing; but you involun-

tarily admired her, as you admired the sudden, soft call of the oriole at evening in the lofty, gloomy birch coppice. I must confess that at any other time I should have passed by such a creature with considerable indifference; I am in no mood now for solitary evening strolls, for orioles; but then . . . . .

Gentlemen, I think that you, like all nice men, have been in love at least once in the course of your lives, and have learned, by personal experience, how love germinates and grows in the human heart; and therefore I will not enlarge overmuch upon what went on within me at that time. Kólosoff and I went quite frequently to Iván Semyónitch's; and, although the accursed cards more than once drove me to utter despair, yet in the mere proximity of the beloved woman (I had fallen in love with Várya), there is a certain strange, sweet, torturing delight. I did not attempt to stifle this dawning sentiment; moreover, when, at last, I made up my mind to call that sentiment by its name, it was already too strong. . . . I silently cherished, and timidly concealed my love. This oppressive fermentation of silent passion pleased me. My sufferings deprived me neither of sleep nor of appetite; but for whole days together I felt in my breast that peculiar physical sensation, which arose within me when, for example, Kólosoff returned with Várya from the garden, and her

whole face exhaled rapturous devotion, and languor from excess of bliss. . . . She lived his life to such a degree, she was so permeated with him, that she imperceptibly acquired his habits, looked in the same way, laughed in the same way as he. . . . . I can imagine what moments she spent with Andréi, for what felicity she was indebted to him. . . . And he . . . . Kólosoff did not lose his liberty; in her absence, I do not think that he even called her to mind; he was still the same care-free, jolly, and happy man, as we had always known him.

So, as I have already told you, Kólosoff and I went pretty often to Iván Semyónitch's. Sometimes (when he was not in the humour) the retired lieutenant did not set me down to cards; in that case, he would silently slink off to a corner, contract his brows in a frown, and stare at every one like a wolf. The first time I delighted him by my indulgence; but afterward, I would sometimes begin to urge him to sit down to a hand at whist; the rôle of a third person is so unbearable! I embarrassed Kólosoff and Várya so disagreeably, although they assured each other that there was no reason why they should stand on ceremony in my presence! . . .

In the meanwhile, time flowed on and on. . . . . They were happy. . . . I am not fond of describing other people's happiness. But, after a while, I began to notice that Várya's child-

ish rapture was gradually beginning to give way to a more womanly, a more disquieting feeling. I began to surmise that the new tune had begun to tinkle in the old fashion, that is to say, that Kólosoff . . . . was growing . . . . slightly cold. This discovery delighted me, I must admit; I will confess that I did not feel the slightest indignation against Andréi.

The intervals between our visits became longer and longer. . . . Várya began to welcome us with tear-swollen eyes. Reproaches made themselves heard. . . . I would ask Kólosoff, with feigned indifference: "Well, shall we go to Iván Semyónitch's to-day?" . . . . He would stare coldly at me, and say calmly: "No, we shall not." It sometimes seemed to me that he smiled in a wily way when he talked with me about Várya. . . . Altogether, I did not fill Gavríloff's place with him. . . . Gavríloff was a thousand times more good-natured and stupid than I was.

Now permit me a slight digression. In speaking to you about my university comrades, I did not mention a certain Shshtchítoff. This Shshtchítoff was in his six-and-thirtieth year; he had been numbered among the students for ten years already. Even now I behold vividly before me his rather long, pale face, his little brown eyes, his long, aquiline nose with its tip twisted awry, his thin, mocking lips, his pom-

pous crest of hair, his chin, which wallowed in a self-satisfied way in a broad, shabby neckerchief of the hue of the raven's wing, his cuffs with brass buttons, his blue frock-coat worn open on the breast, his motley-hued waistcoat. . . . . I seem to hear his disagreeable, quavering laugh. . . . He ran about everywhere, distinguished himself at every possible sort of a " dancing-class." . . . . I remember that I could not listen without a shudder to his cynical stories. . . . . Kólosoff one day compared him to an unswept room in a Russian eating-house . . . . a frightful comparison! And yet, that man possessed an immense amount of brains, common sense, observation, and sagacity. . . . He sometimes astounded us with some word so practical, so just, so keen, that we all involuntarily fell silent, and stared at him in amazement. But, you know, a Russian man really does n't care in the least whether he has uttered a bit of nonsense or a sensible thing. Shshtchítoff was particularly feared by those conceited, dreamy and incapable striplings who painfully hatch out, after whole days of effort, the most detestable rhymes, read them in drawling tones to their " friends," and despise all positive knowledge. One of these he simply drove out of Moscow by incessantly repeating to him two lines of his own composition:

" Man —
That unflayed skeleton. . . ."

He had rhymed "skeleton" with "man."[1] Yet Shshtchítoff himself did nothing, either, and learned nothing. . . . But that is quite in the usual order of things. Well, so that Shshtchítoff, God knows why, began to jeer at my romantic attachment to Kólosoff. On the first occasion, I consigned him to the devil, with noble indignation; on the second occasion, I informed him, with cold scorn, that he was not capable of judging our friendship—but I did not drive him away; and when, as he took leave of me, he remarked that I did not even dare to praise Kólosoff without the latter's permission, I felt vexed; Shshtchítoff's last words had effected a lodgment in my soul.—For more than two weeks I had not seen Várya. . . . Pride, love, confused anticipation—a multitude of different emotions were stirring within me. . . . I waved my hand in despair, and with a frightful sinking at the heart, I set off alone to Iván Semyónitch's.

I know not how I made my way to the familiar little house; I remember that I sat down several times to rest on the road—not from fatigue, but from emotion. I entered the anteroom, and before I had managed to utter a single word the door from the hall flew open, and Várya ran out to meet me.

"At last!"—she said in a trembling voice;—"but where is Andréi Nikoláevitch?"

[1] Skeleton—*skelét*; man—*tchelovyék*.—TRANSLATOR.

"Kólosoff has not come . . . ." I muttered with an effort.

"He has not come!"—she repeated.

"Yes . . . he bade me say to you that . . . . he was detained. . . ." I positively did not know myself what I was saying, and dared not lift my eyes. Várya stood motionless and silent before me. I darted a glance at her; she had turned her head aside; two large tears were rolling slowly down her cheeks. In the expression of her face there was so much sudden, bitter grief, the conflict between modesty, distress, and confidence in me was so touchingly depicted in the involuntary movement of her poor little head, that my heart sank within me. I advanced a little . . . . she shuddered swiftly and ran away. In the hall Iván Semyónitch met me.

"What 's the meaning of this, my dear fellow? Are you alone, sir?" he asked me, screwing up his left eye strangely.

"I am, sir," I replied in confusion.

Sidorénko suddenly burst into a guffaw, and retreated into the adjoining room. Never before had I found myself in so utterly stupid a situation,—the devil knows how hateful it was! But there was no help for it. I began to pace back and forth in the hall.—"What was that fat boar laughing at?"—I thought.

Matryóna Semyónovna emerged into the hall with a stocking in her hands, and seated her-

self by the little window. I began to chat with her.

In the meantime tea was served. Várya came down-stairs, pale and sorrowful. The retired lieutenant jested about Kólosoff.

"I know,"—said he, "what sort of a goose he is: now, I suppose, you could n't lure him hither even with a kalátch!" [1]

Várya hastily rose and withdrew. Iván Semyónitch gazed after her, whistling roguishly the while. I cast an angry glance at him.—"Can it be,"—I thought, "that he knows all?" And the lieutenant, as though divining my thoughts, nodded his head affirmatively.

Immediately after tea I rose and took my leave. —"We shall see you again, my dear fellow," remarked the lieutenant. I did not say a single word in reply. . . . I had simply begun to be afraid of that man.

On the porch some one's cold, trembling hand clasped my hand; I glanced round: it was Várya.

"I must speak with you," she whispered.— "Come as early as possible to-morrow, straight to the garden. Papa takes a nap after dinner; no one will disturb us."

I pressed her hand in silence, and we parted.

On the following day, at three o'clock in the

[1] A peculiarly delicious wheaten roll, which is made with particular skill in Moscow.—TRANSLATOR.

afternoon, I was already in Iván Semyónitch's garden. I had not seen Kólosoff that morning, although he had dropped in to call. It was an autumn day, grey, but tranquil and warm. The slender yellow blades of grass swayed mournfully over the faded lawn; alert tomtits were hopping over the naked, dark-brown branches of the hickory-tree; belated larks were running hurriedly along the paths somewhere; a hare was cautiously making his way through the vegetables; the herd was roaming idly over the stubble-field. I found Várya in the garden, under an apple-tree, seated on a bench; she wore a dark, somewhat rumpled gown; unfeigned grief was expressed in her weary glance, and in her carelessly-arranged hair.

I sat down by her side. Both of us maintained silence. For a long time she twirled in her hands some flower or other, then bent her head, and said:

"Andréi Nikoláevitch. . . ."

I immediately observed from the movement of her lips that she was preparing to weep, and I began to comfort her, to assure her fervently of Andréi's devotion. . . . She heard me out, shook her head sorrowfully, uttered unintelligible words, and immediately relapsed into silence, but did not weep. The first moments, which I had dreaded most of all, passed off quite successfully. Gradually, she began to talk about Andréi.

"I know he no longer loves me now,"—she kept repeating: "God bless him! I cannot think how I am to live without him. . . . I do not sleep at night, I weep continually. . . . But what am I to do? . . . . What am I to do?" . . . . Her eyes filled with tears. "He seemed so good to me . . . . and now . . . ."

Várya wiped away her tears, coughed, and drew herself up.

"It does not seem so very long," she went on, "since he read to me out of Púshkin, since he sat with me on this bench. . . ."

Várya's ingenuous chatter touched me; I listened in silence to her avowal; my soul slowly became imbued with a bitter, torturing felicity; I never took my eyes from that pale face, from those long, wet eyelashes, from those half-parted, slightly-parched lips. . . . And yet, I felt . . . . Would you like to listen to a brief psychological analysis of my sentiments at that moment? In the first place, I was tormented by the thought that I was not beloved, that it was not I who was causing Várya to suffer; in the second place, I was delighted by her confidence; I knew that she would be grateful for my having furnished her the possibility of putting her grief into words; in the third place, I inwardly registered a vow to bring Kólosoff and Várya together again, and the consciousness of my magnanimity comforted me . . . . in the fourth place, I hoped by my self-

sacrifice to touch Várya's heart—and then . . . . you see, I do not spare myself; thank God, it is time! But now, the clock on the belfry of the *** monastery struck five; evening was swiftly drawing on. Várya hastily rose to her feet, thrust into my hand a tiny note, and went toward the house. I overtook her, promised her to bring Andréi, and darted swiftly, as though I were a happy lover, through the wicket-gate into the fields. On the note, in uncertain chirography, were inscribed the words: " To my dear sir, Andréi Nikoláevitch."

Early on the morning of the following day, I set out for Kólosoff. I must confess that, although I had assured myself that my intentions were not only noble, but even, as a whole, filled with magnanimous self-sacrifice, I nevertheless was conscious of a certain awkwardness, even of timidity. Sitting with him was a certain Puzyrítzyn, a student who had failed to pass his examinations, one of the composers of romances known under the name of " Moscow " or " popular." [1] Puzyrítzyn was an extremely good-natured and timid man, and was eternally making ready to enter the hussars, in spite of his three-and-thirty years. He belonged to the category of people who find it unavoidably necessary to give utterance once every twenty-four hours

[1] Literally, *grey*, which is one appellation for the common people.—Translator.

to some such phrase as, "all the most beautiful things perish at the moment of their sumptuous blossoming,—such is the fate of the beautiful in this world," so that, during all the rest of the day, they may with befitting agreeability smoke a pipe in the circle of their "good comrades." For that reason, also, he was called an idealist. So then, this Puzyrítzyn was sitting with Kólosoff, and reading to him some "fragment." I set to listening: the question concerned a young man who loves a girl, murders her, and so forth. At last Puzyrítzyn came to an end, and went away. His absurd composition, his rapturously bawling voice, his presence, as a whole, had aroused Kólosoff's jeering irritability. I felt that I had come at a bad time, but there was no help for it; without any prefatory remarks, I handed Várya's note to Andréi.

Kólosoff stared at me in amazement, broke the seal of the note, ran his eyes over it, and preserved silence for a while, smiling composedly. —"Well, now!"—he ejaculated at last.—"So thou hast been to Iván Semyónitch's?"

"Yes, I was there alone yesterday evening,"—I replied abruptly and decisively.

"Ah!"—remarked Kólosoff with a sneer, and lighted his pipe.

"Andréi,"—I said to him,—"art not thou sorry for her? . . . If thou couldst but have seen her tears. . . ." And I began eloquently to de-

scribe my visit of the preceding day. I really was much affected.

Kólosoff maintained silence, and smoked his pipe.

"Didst thou sit with her under the apple-tree in the garden?"—he said at last. "I remember that in May I sat with her on that same bench. . . . . The apple-tree was in blossom; now and then the fresh, white flowers fell on us; I held both of Várya's hands . . . . we were happy then. . . . Now the apple-tree is out of bloom, and the apples on it are sour."

I flared up with noble indignation, and began to upbraid Andréi for his coldness, his cruelty; I began to argue with him that he had no right to abandon so suddenly a young girl in whom he had aroused a multitude of new impressions; I entreated him at least to go and take leave of Várya. Kólosoff listened to me until I had finished.

"Let us assume,"—he said to me, when, agitated and weary, I flung myself into an easy-chair:—"let us assume that it is permissible for thee, as my friend, to condemn me. . . . But listen now to my justification, although . . . ."

Here he paused awhile, and smiled strangely.

"Várya is a very fine girl,"—he continued, "and is guilty of no wrong whatsoever toward me. . . . On the contrary I am indebted to her for a very great deal. I have ceased to visit her

for a very simple reason—I have ceased to love her. . . ."

"But why? but why?"—I interrupted him.

"God knows why. So long as I loved her, I belonged wholly to her; I did not think of the future, and shared everything, my whole life with her . . . . now that passion has died out in me. . . . What then? dost thou bid me dissimulate, pretend to be in love, pray? And why? Out of pity for her? If she is an honest girl, she herself will not desire such alms, but if she is glad to console herself with my . . . . sympathy, the devil 's in her!"

Kólosoff's heedlessly sharp expressions offended me, possibly all the more because I was secretly in love with the woman in question. . . . I flared up.

"Enough,"—I said to him:—"stop that! I know why thou hast ceased to visit Várya."

"Why is it?"

"Tániusha has forbidden thee." In uttering these words, I fancied that I had violently offended Andréi. This Tániusha was an extremely "light" young lady, black-haired and swarthy, aged five-and-twenty, as free and easy and as clever as the devil, a Shshtchítoff in female garb. Kólosoff quarrelled with her and made peace with her five times a month. She loved him passionately, although at times, when they were estranged, she vowed and swore that she

thirsted for his blood . . . . and Andréi could not get along without her. Kólosoff looked at me and calmly remarked: " Perhaps."

" It is not ' perhaps,' but certainly! " I yelled.

At last my reproaches bored Kólosoff. . . . He rose and put on his cap.

" Whither away? "

" For a stroll; you and Puzyrítzyn have given me a headache."

" Art thou angry with me? "

" No," he answered, with his charming smile, and offered me his hand.

" At any rate, what dost thou bid me say to Várya? "

" What? " . . . . He pondered for a while.

" She told thee," he said,—" that she and I had read Púshkin together. . . . Remind her of one of Púshkin's verses."

" Of which one? " I asked impatiently.

" Why, of this one:

'That which has been shall never be again.' "

With these words he left the room. I followed him; on the stairs he paused.

" And is she greatly grieved? " he asked me, pulling his cap down over his eyes.

" Yes, very greatly! " . . .

" Poor girl! Do thou console her, Nikolái; for thou lovest her."

"Yes, I have become attached to her, of course. . . ."

"Thou lovest her,"—repeated Kólosoff, looking me straight in the eye. I turned away in silence; we parted.

On reaching home, I was, as it were, in a fever.

"I have fulfilled my duty," I thought; "I have conquered my own self-love; I have advised Andréi to make up with Várya! ! . . Now I have rights: he that will not when he may, when he would he shall have nay." Nevertheless, Andréi's indifference wounded me. He was not jealous of me, he had ordered me to console her. . . . "But is Várya such an ordinary girl? . . . . Is she not worthy even of compassion? . . . . People will be found who will understand how to prize that which you despise, Andréi Nikoláitch! . . . . But what 's the use? Surely, she does not love me. . . . Yes, she does not love me now; up to this time she has not utterly lost hope that Kólosoff will return. . . . But later on . . . . who knows? my devotion will touch her, I shall renounce all claims. . . . I shall give her the whole of myself, irrevocably. . . . Várya! is it possible that thou wilt not come to love me . . . never? . . . . never? . . ."

That was the sort of speeches which your humble servant uttered in the capital city Moscow, in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-three, in the house of his respected tutor.

I wept . . . . I languished. . . . The weather was atrocious . . . a fine, drizzling rain streamed with a thin, persistent squeak down the window-panes; damp, dark-grey clouds hung motionlessly over the town. I dined in haste, made no reply to the anxious queries of the good-natured German woman, who began to whimper herself at the sight of my red, swollen eyes (German women—as everybody knows—are always ready to cry); I behaved in a very ruthless manner to my tutor . . . . and immediately after dinner, I set off for Iván Semyónitch's house. . . . Having asserted my sovereign mastery over a shaky, wretched little drozhky, I asked myself: "What now? Shall I tell Várya everything, just as it is, or shall I continue to be wily, and wean her, little by little, from Andréi?" . . . . I drove to Iván Semyónitch's house, and still did not know what to decide upon. . . . I found the whole family in the hall. Várya turned frightfully pale when she saw me, but did not stir from her place; Sidorénko began to talk to me in a peculiarly jeering sort of manner. I answered him as best I could, from time to time darting a glance at Várya, and almost unconsciously imparted to my countenance a dejectedly pensive expression. Again the lieutenant made up a whist-party. Várya seated herself near the window, and did not move.

"Thou art bored now, I suppose?"—Iván

Semyónitch asked her a score of times. At last I succeeded in snatching a suitable moment.

"You are alone again," Várya whispered to me.

"Yes," I replied gloomily:—"and, in all probability, for a long time."

She swiftly dropped her head.

"Did you give him my note?" she said, in a barely audible voice.

"Yes."

"Well?"

She sighed. I glanced at her. . . . A malicious joy suddenly flashed up within me.

"He bade me tell you," I enunciated, pausing between my words, "'that which has been shall never be again.'"

Várya clutched at her heart with her left hand, extended her right in front of her; her whole form swayed, and she hastily left the room. I started to run after her. . . . Iván Semyónitch stopped me. I remained another half hour with him, but Várya did not make her appearance. On my way home, I felt conscience-stricken . . . . conscience-stricken toward Várya, toward Andréi, toward myself. Although, they say, it is better to hew off at one blow a suffering member than to weary a sick person for a long time, yet who had given me the right so ruthlessly to stab the heart of the poor young girl? . . . . For a long time I could not get

to sleep . . . . but fall asleep I did at last. In general, I must repeat, "love" never once has deprived me of my sleep.

I began to visit Iván Semyónitch's house quite frequently: Kólosoff and I met, as before, but neither he nor I mentioned Várya. My relations to her were of a decidedly strange nature. She had become attached to me with that affection which precludes all possibility of love; she could not fail to notice my fervent sympathy, and chatted willingly with me . . . . about what, do you think?—about Kólosoff, about Kólosoff alone! That man had taken possession of her to such a degree that somehow she did not seem to belong to herself. In vain did I try to arouse her pride . . . she either held her peace, or talked, and how!—fairly chattered about Kólosoff! I did not then suspect that grief of that sort, loquacious grief, is, in reality, far more genuine than all silent sufferings. I confess that I lived through many bitter moments during that period. I felt that I was not capable of taking Kólosoff's place; I felt that Várya's past was so full, so beautiful . . . . and the present so poor. . . . . I reached the point where I involuntarily shuddered at the words, "Do you remember?" . . . . with which almost every speech of hers began. She grew rather thin during the first days of our acquaintance . . . . but afterward she recovered her health, and even waxed merry;

at that time, she might have been compared to a little bird which has been wounded, and has not, as yet, fully recovered. In the meantime, my position had become unbearable; the very lowest passions gradually began to take possession of my soul; it even befell that I calumniated Kólosoff in the presence of Várya. I made up my mind to put an end to such unnatural relations. But how? Part from Várya I could not. . . . Declare my love to her I dared not; I felt that I could not, as yet, hope that it would be reciprocated. Marry her. . . . That thought terrified me; I was only eighteen years of age; it seemed terrible to me to " enslave " my whole future so early: I remembered my father, I heard the jeers of my comrade Kólosoff. . . . But, it is said, every thought is like dough; it is worth while to knead it well—and you can make anything out of it. I began to meditate on marriage for whole days at a time. . . . I pictured to myself with what gratitude Várya's heart would be filled to overflowing when I, Kólosoff's comrade and confidant, should offer her my hand, knowing that she was hopelessly in love with another. Experienced people, I recollected, had frequently told me that marrying for love was the most absolute folly; I began to indulge in fancies: I pictured to myself our tranquil life together, somewhere in a warm corner of southern Russia; I mentally watched the gradual transition of Várya's heart

from gratitude to friendship, from friendship to love. . . . I promised myself that I would immediately leave Moscow, and the university, and forget everything and everybody. I began to avoid meeting Kólosoff. At last, on one clear, winter morning (on the evening before Várya had, somehow, peculiarly enchanted me), I dressed myself in my best, emerged slowly and solemnly from my chamber, hired a capital drozhky, and drove to Iván Semyónitch's. Várya was sitting alone in the hall, and reading Karamzín.[1] At sight of me, she softly laid her book on her lap, and with anxious curiosity gazed into my face: I had never been in the habit of going to them in the morning. . . . I seated myself by her side; my heart beat torturingly.

"What are you reading?" I asked at last.

"Karamzín."

"Well? are you interested in Russian . . . ?" She suddenly interrupted me.

"Listen; you do not come from Andréi, do you?"

That name, the tremulous, questioning voice, the all-joyful, half-timid expression of her face, all those indubitable tokens of living love sank into my soul like arrows. I made up my mind either to part from Várya, or to receive from her herself the right forever to banish from her lips

[1] The famous historian. He also wrote a number of much-admired sentimental high-strung tales (1765–1826).—TRANSLATOR.

the hateful name of Andréi. I do not remember what I said to her then; at first I must have expressed myself somewhat obscurely, because she did not understand me for a long time; at last, I could endure it no longer, and I almost shrieked: "I love you, and I want to marry you."

"You love me?" said Várya, in amazement.

It seemed to me that she wanted to rise, to go away, to reject me.

"For God's sake," I whispered panting,— "do not answer me either 'yes' or 'no'; reflect: to-morrow I will return for a decisive answer. . . . I have loved you this long time, I want to be your defender, your friend. Do not answer me now, do not answer. . . . Farewell until to-morrow."

With these words, I rushed out of the room. Iván Semyónitch met me in the anteroom, and not only was not surprised at my call, but even, with an agreeable smile, offered me an apple. Such an unexpected piece of amiability startled me so that I was fairly petrified.

"Pray, take the apple; 't is a good little apple, really!" repeated Iván Semyónitch. I mechanically took the apple at last and drove home with it.

You can easily imagine how I passed all that day and the following morning. I slept pretty badly that night. "My God! My God!" I thought: "what if she should refuse me! . . . .

I shall perish, . . . . I shall perish, . . . ." I kept repeating despondently. "Yes, she will infallibly reject me. . . . And why was I so hasty! !". . . . . Being desirous of diverting my mind in some manner, I began to write a letter to my father—a desperate, a decisive letter. In speaking of myself, I used the words "your son." Bóboff dropped in to see me. I began to weep upon his breast, which, probably, surprised Bóboff not a little. . . . I then learned that he had come to me to borrow money (his landlord had threatened to eject him from the house); he had been obliged—speaking in the student language—"to withdraw backward and return. . . ." At last, the great moment arrived. As I emerged from my room, I stopped in the doorway. "With what feelings," I thought, "shall I step across this threshold again?" . . . . My agitation, at the sight of Iván Semyónitch's little house, was so powerful that I alighted from the carriage, got a handful of snow, and eagerly pressed my face to it. "O Lord!" I thought: "if I find Várya alone,—I am lost!" My legs gave way beneath me; I barely managed to mount the porch. My wishes were fulfilled. I found Várya in the drawing-room with Matryóna Semyónovna. I made my bows awkwardly, and seated myself by the old woman. Várya's face was somewhat paler than usual . . . . it seemed to me that she was trying to avoid my glances. . . .

But what was my state of mind when Matryóna Semyónovna suddenly rose, and went into the next room! . . . I began to stare out of the window—I was quivering all over internally like an aspen-leaf. Várya maintained silence. . . . At last I conquered my timidity, stepped up to her, bent my head. . . .

"What have you to say to me?" I enunciated in a dying voice. Várya turned away,—tears sparkled on her eyelashes.

"I see," I went on, "that it is useless for me to hope." . . . . Várya cast a bashful glance around, and silently gave me her hand.

"Várya!" I said involuntarily . . . . and halted, as though frightened at my own hopes.

"Speak to papa," she said at last.

"Do you permit me to speak to Iván Semyónitch?"

"Yes, sir." I showered kisses on her hands.

"Enough, sir; enough, sir," whispered Várya —and suddenly burst into tears. I sat down beside her, soothed her, and wiped away her tears. . . . Luckily, Iván Semyónitch was not at home, and Matryóna Semyónovna had gone off to her little chamber up-stairs. I swore love and fidelity to Várya. . . .

"Yes," she said, repressing her final sobs and incessantly wiping away her tears:—"I know that you are a good man; you are an honourable man; you are not like Kólosoff. . . ."

"Again that name?" . . . . I thought. But with what delight did I kiss those warm, moist little hands! with what quiet joy did I gaze into that sweet face! . . . . I talked to her of the future, I strode about the room, I sat down in front of her on the floor, I covered my eyes with my hand and shuddered. . . . Iván Semyónitch's heavy tread broke off our conversation. Várya rose hastily and went off to her own room—but without pressing my hand or glancing at me. Mr. Sidorénko was still more amiable than he had been on the preceding day: he laughed, rubbed his belly, made jokes at the expense of Matryóna Semyónovna, and so forth. I would have liked to ask his "blessing" on the spot, but changed my mind, and deferred it until the morrow. His ponderous jests bored me; moreover, I felt tired. . . . I took leave of him and drove away.

I belong to the category of people who are fond of meditating on their own sensations, although I cannot endure such people myself. And therefore, after the first outburst of heartfelt joy, I immediately began to surrender myself to various reflections. When I had driven about half a verst from the house of the retired lieutenant, I tossed my cap into the air in excess of rapture, and shouted: "Hurrah!" But while I was wending my way through the long and crooked streets of Moscow, my thoughts gradu-

ally took another turn. Divers decidedly dirty doubts began to bustle about in my soul. I recalled my conversation with Iván Semyónitch about marriage in general . . . . and involuntarily said, in an undertone: "Just think what a hypocrite the old rascal is!" . . . To tell the truth, I kept incessantly reiterating: "But, on the other hand, Várya is mine! mine!" . . . . But, in the first place, that "but"—okh, that *but!*—and, in the second place, the words "Várya is mine!" awakened in me not a profound, shattering joy, but some sort of commonplace, conceited rapture. . . . If Várya had flatly rejected me I would have flamed up with wild passion; but, having obtained her consent, I resembled a man who has said to a guest: "Make yourself at home"—and the guest actually begins to dispose of things in the room, as though it were his own house. "If she loved Kólosoff," I thought, "how is it that she has so speedily consented? Evidently, she is glad to marry anybody. . . . Well, and what of that? So much the better for me." . . . . With these strange and troubled feelings I crossed the threshold of my home. Perhaps you think my story lacking in plausibility, gentlemen? I do not know whether it resembles the truth, but I do know that everything which I have told you is the complete and genuine truth. However, during the whole of that day I gave myself up to feverish merri-

ment, told myself that I simply did not deserve such happiness; but the next morning . . . .

A wonderful thing is sleep! It not only renews the body, in a certain way it also renews the soul, restores it to its pristine simplicity and naturalness. In the course of the day you have succeeded in tuning yourself up to concert pitch, in becoming permeated with falsehood, with lying thoughts . . . . sleep, with its cold flood, washes away all these wretched quibbles, and, on awakening, you are capable, for a few moments at least, of comprehending and loving the truth. I awoke, and on reflecting upon the past day, I felt conscious of a certain awkwardness . . . . I felt rather ashamed of all my pranks. With involuntary uneasiness I thought of my visit which was to be made that day, about the explanation with Iván Semyónitch. . . . This uneasiness was torturing and fatiguing; it resembled the uneasiness of a hare which hears the baying of the hounds, and must at last emerge from its native forest into the fields . . . while in the fields the sharp-fanged harriers are awaiting it. . . . "Why was I in such a hurry!" I repeated, as on the preceding evening, but in quite another sense now. I remember that that frightful difference between yesterday and today surprised even me; it then occurred to me for the first time that mysteries lie hidden in the life of man—strange mysteries. . . . With

childish perplexity I gazed at that new, non-fantastic, actual world. By the word "actuality" many persons mean the word "triviality." Perhaps that is sometimes the case; but I must confess that the first appearance of actuality to me shook me profoundly, frightened me, startled me. . . .

What big speeches on the subject of love *which has not had its dance out,* to speak in Gógol's words! . . . I will return to my story. In the course of that morning, I again assured myself that I was the happiest of mortals. I drove out of town to Iván Semyónitch's. He received me very joyfully; he started to go off to a neighbour's, but I stopped him. I was afraid to remain alone with Várya. That evening passed cheerfully but not comfortably. Várya was neither one thing nor the other, neither amiable nor sad . . . . neither pretty nor homely. I scanned her, as the philosophers say, with the objective eye—that is, as a satiated man gazes at food. I decided that her hands were rather red. However, my blood grew hot within me at intervals, and, as I gazed at her, I surrendered myself to other reveries and thoughts. It was not so very long since I had made a so-called proposal, and here already I was feeling that she and I were living the conjugal life . . . . that our souls already constituted one *very beautiful whole,* belonged to each other, and, consequently,

were trying to search out, each for itself, its special path. . . .

"Well, have you spoken to papa?" Várya said to me, when she and I were left alone together. That question displeased me dreadfully. . . . I thought to myself:—"You 're in an awful hurry, Varvára Ivánovna!"

"No, not yet," I replied rather drily:—"but I will speak to him."

Altogether, I treated her somewhat carelessly. In spite of my promise, I said nothing decisive to Iván Semyónitch. When I went away I pressed his hand significantly, and informed him that I must have a talk with him . . . . that was all. . . .

"Good-bye!" I said to Várya.

"Until we meet again," said she.

I will not weary you long, gentlemen; I am afraid of exhausting your patience. . . . That interview did not take place. I never went back to Iván Semyónitch. To tell the truth, the first few days of my separation from Várya did not pass off without tears, reproaches, and agitation; I myself was alarmed at the speedy withering of my love; a score of times I was on the point of going to her; I pictured to myself in vivid colours her surprise, her grief, her sense of injury, but—I did not go back to Iván Semyónitch's. I entreated her forgiveness mentally; I mentally went down on my knees before her,

assured her of my deep remorse—and once, when I encountered in the street a young girl who bore a slight resemblance to her, I set off on a run without looking behind me, and only stopped to take breath in a confectioner's shop, behind five-fold puff-paste patties. The word "to-morrow" was invented for irresolute people, and for children; I, being a child, soothed myself with that magic word. "I will go to her to-morrow without fail," I said to myself, and ate and slept capitally to-day. I began to think a great deal more about Kólosoff than about Várya . . . . everywhere and incessantly I beheld before me his frank, bold, unconcerned face. I began to go to him again. He welcomed me as of yore. But how deeply conscious I was of his superiority over myself! How ridiculous did all my fancies appear to me—my mournful pensiveness during the period of Kólosoff's connection with Várya, my magnanimous determination to bring them together again, my anticipations, my raptures, my remorse! . . .

I had enacted a wretched, noisy, and prolonged comedy, while he had lived through that period so simply, so finely. . . . You will say to me: "What is there surprising about that? Your Kólosoff fell in love with a young girl, then fell out of love with her and abandoned her. . . . But that has happened to everybody." . . . Agreed; but which one of us has known how to

bid farewell in time to his past? Who—tell me —who is not afraid of the reproaches, I will not say of the reproaches of a woman . . . . of the reproaches of the first blockhead who comes to hand? Which one of us has not yielded to the desire to make a display of magnanimity, or self-conceitedly to play with another devoted heart? In conclusion, which of us is capable of resisting petty self-love—the petty *nice feelings:* compassion and remorse? Oh, gentlemen! the man who parts from a woman formerly beloved, at that great and bitter moment when he becomes conscious that his heart is not wholly, not completely permeated with her, that man, believe me, understands the sacredness of love better and more profoundly than those pusillanimous people who, out of boredom, out of weakness, continue to play on the half-broken strings of their languid and sensitive hearts.

At the beginning of my story I told you that we all called Andréi Kólosoff a remarkable man. And if a clear, simple view of life, if the absence of all phrase-making in a young man can be termed a remarkable thing, then Kólosoff deserved the name which had been bestowed on him. At a certain age, to be natural is equivalent to being remarkable. . . . But it is time for me to finish. I thank you for your attention. . . . Ah, but I forgot to tell you that, three months after my last visit, I met that old rascal Iván

Semyónitch. As a matter of course, I endeavoured to slip past him swiftly and unperceived, but, nevertheless, I could not help overhearing the following words, uttered with vexation: "Some folks are so broad-minded, you know!"

"And what became of Várya?"—asked some one.

"I don't know,"—replied the story-teller.

We all rose and went our various ways.

# THE BULLY

(1846)

# THE BULLY

## I

THE *** regiment of cuirassiers was stationed, in the year 1829, in the village of Kirílovka, of the K*** Government. This village, with its cottages and grain-ricks, with its green hemp-patches and emaciated willows, appeared, from a distance, to be an island in the middle of a boundless sea of tilled, black-loam fields. In the middle of the village was a small pond, eternally covered with goose-down, with filthy, furrowed banks; a hundred paces from the pond, on the other side of the road, towered aloft a wooden manor-house of some gentlefolk, long empty and sadly sagging over on one side; in the garden grew ancient, sterile apple-trees, and lofty birches studded with crows' nests; at the end of the principal avenue, in a tiny house (formerly the gentry's bath-house), dwelt a decrepit butler who, grunting and clearing his throat, from ancient habit dragged himself every morning through the garden to the apartments of the gentry, although there was nothing in them to guard, except a dozen white arm-chairs upholstered in faded stuff, two pot-bellied chests

of drawers on crooked legs and with brass handles, four pictures full of holes, and one black negro of alabaster, with a broken nose. The owner of this house, a young and heedless man, lived sometimes in Petersburg, sometimes abroad —and had utterly forgotten his hereditary estate. It had come into his possession eight years previously, inherited from an extremely aged uncle, once known to all the countryside for his capital fruit-liqueurs. Empty, dark-green bottles were still scattered about in the storehouse, along with various rubbish, copy-books in variegated covers, closely written all over in miserly fashion, antique glass chandeliers, a nobleman's uniform of the epoch of Katherine II., a rusty sword with a steel hilt, and so forth.

In one of the wings the Colonel himself lodged —a married man, tall of stature, parsimonious of words, surly, and sleepy. In the other wing lived the adjutant, a sensual and highly-perfumed man, fond of flowers and butterflies. The society of the officers of the *** regiment in no way differed from any other society. Among them, a certain Avdyéi Iványovitch Lutchkóff, staff-captain, bore the reputation of a bully. Lutchkóff was small of stature, and not good-looking; he had a small, sallow, lean face, thin black hair, ordinary features, and small, dark eyes. He had early been left an orphan, had grown up in indigence and oppression. For

whole weeks together he behaved quietly . . . . and all of a sudden—it seemed as though some fiend had taken possession of him—he would begin to harass everybody, bother everybody, stare everybody impudently in the eye; well, he fairly challenged people to a quarrel. Moreover, Avdyéi did not shun his fellow-officers, but was on friendly terms only with the perfumed adjutant; he did not play cards, and he did not drink liquor.

In May, 1829, not long before the beginning of drill, there came to the regiment a young cornet, Feódor Feódorovitch Kíster, a Russian nobleman of German extraction, very fair-haired and very modest, cultured and well-read. Until the age of twenty he had lived in the paternal home under the wing of his mamma, his grandmamma, and two aunts; he had entered the military service solely at the desire of his grandmother, who even in her old age could not see a white cockade without emotion. . . . He discharged his duties without any special eagerness, but with zeal, just as though he were conscientiously performing his duty; he dressed, not foppishly, but neatly, and according to the regulations. On the very first day of his arrival, Feódor Feódorovitch reported himself to his commanding officers; then he began to put his quarters in order. He had brought with him some cheap wall-paper, rugs, shelves, and so forth;

he papered all his walls and the doors, erected various partitions, ordered the yard to be cleaned up, rebuilt the stable and the kitchen; he even set apart a place for a bath. . . . For a whole week he busied himself; but it was a delight to enter his room afterward. In front of the windows stood a neat table, covered with various knick-knacks; in one corner was a small stand for books, with the busts of Goethe and Schiller; on the walls hung maps, four Grévedon heads and a hunting-gun; beside the table ran a stately row of pipes with correct mouth-pieces; on the floor of the anteroom lay a rug; all the doors fastened with locks; the windows were hung with curtains. Everything in Feódor Feódorovitch's room exhaled an atmosphere of order and cleanliness. It was quite different with his comrades! You could hardly make your way to one of them through the filthy yard; in the anteroom, behind a peeling canvas screen, an orderly would be snoring; on the floor lay rotten straw; on the cooking-stove, boots and the bottom of a jar overflowing with shoe-blacking; in the room itself a warped *l'ombre* table, scrawled all over with chalk; on the table, glasses half filled with cold, dark-brown tea; along the wall, a broad, broken-down, greasy divan; on the windows, pipe-ashes. . . . In the clumsy and bloated arm-chair sat the master of the house himself, in a grass-green dressing-gown with crimson

plush facings, and an embroidered skull-cap of Asiatic origin, while by the master's side a fat and good-for-nothing dog in a stinking brass collar was snoring. . . All the doors were always wide open. . . .

Feódor Feódorovitch pleased his new comrades. They liked him for his good-nature, his modesty, his hearty cordiality, and his innate inclination to "everything beautiful,"—in a word, for everything which in any other officer they would, possibly, have considered unbefitting. They called Kíster "the pretty girl," and treated him tenderly and gently. Avdyéi Ivánovitch alone looked askance upon him. One day, after drill, Lutchkóff stepped up to him, with slightly-compressed lips and inflated nostrils.

"Good morning, Mr. Knaster."

Kíster glanced at him with surprise.

"My respects, Mr. Knaster," repeated Lutchkóff.

"My name is Kíster, my dear sir."

"You don't say so, Mr. Knaster."

Feódor Feódorovitch turned his back on him and went home. Lutchkóff stared after him with a sneer.

On the following day, immediately after drill, he stepped up to Kíster again.

"Well, how 's your health, Mr. Kinderbalzam?"

Kíster flared up, and stared him straight in the face. Avdyéi Ivánovitch's little, bilious eyes lighted up with malicious joy.

"I 'm speaking to you, Mr. Kinderbalzam!"

"My dear sir," replied Feódor Feódorovitch, —"I consider your jest stupid and indecorous— do you hear? stupid and indecorous."

"When shall we fight?" retorted Lutchkóff calmly.

"Whenever you like . . . . say to-morrow."

The next day they fought. Lutchkóff slightly wounded Kíster, and, to the intense amazement of the seconds, stepped up to the wounded man, took his hand, and asked his pardon. Kíster was confined to the house for a fortnight. Avdyéi Ivánovitch dropped in several times to see the invalid, and after Feódor Feódorovitch's recovery, struck up a friendship with him. Whether it was that the young officer's resolution had pleased him, or a sentiment akin to remorse had awaked in his soul, it would be difficult to determine; . . . . but dating from the duel with Kíster, Avdyéi Ivánovitch was hardly ever parted from him, and first called him Feódor, then Fédya. In his presence, he became another man, and—strange to say!—not to his advantage. It did not suit his style to be gentle and soft. Nevertheless, he did not evoke sympathy in any one: such was his fate! He belonged to the category of people who seem to have been endowed with

the right of power over others; but nature had denied him the gifts which form the indispensable justification for such a right. As he had received no education, and was not distinguished by brains, he ought not to have divested himself of his ordinary character; perhaps harshness in him proceeded precisely from his consciousness of the defects of his own bringing-up, from a desire to conceal himself entirely beneath one unvarying mask. . Avdyéi Iványovitch had first made himself despise people; then he had observed that it was not a difficult matter to frighten them, and had begun to despise them in reality. Lutchkóff delighted in putting an end, by his mere appearance, to every conversation which was not utterly trivial. "I know nothing and never learned anything, and have no abilities," he thought to himself; "therefore don't you know anything and don't you display your abilities before me. . . . ." Kíster forced Lutchkóff to emerge, at last, from his assumed rôle, possibly because until his acquaintance with him the bully had not encountered a single really "ideal" man —that is to say, a man disinterestedly and good-naturedly immersed in dreams, and consequently indulgent and not conceited. Avdyéi Iványovitch would come to Kíster of a morning, light his pipe, and quietly seat himself in an easy-chair. Lutchkóff was not ashamed of his ignorance in Kíster's presence; he trusted

—and not in vain—to the latter's German discretion.

"Well, what now?"—he would begin:—"what didst thou do last evening? Read, I suppose, hey?"

"Yes, I read. . . ."

"And what didst thou read? Come, tell me, my dear fellow, tell me."—Avdyéi Ivánovitch maintained his jeering tone to the end.

"I read Kleist's 'Idyl,' brother. Akh, how fine it is! If thou wilt permit me, I will translate a few lines to thee."—And Kíster translated with fervour, while Lutchkóff, wrinkling up his forehead, and compressing his lips, listened attentively. . . . "Yes, yes,"—he kept repeating hastily, with a disagreeable smile,—"'t is fine . . . very fine. . . I remember that I have read that . . . . 't is fine.

"Tell me, please,"—he added with a drawl and, as it were, reluctantly:—"what is thy opinion of Louis the Fourteenth?"

And Kíster began to talk about Louis XIV. And Lutchkóff listened, did not understand much of it at all, understood some of it wrongly . . . . and at last decided to make a remark. . . . . The idea threw him into a perspiration: "Well, and what if I do talk nonsense?" he thought. And, as a matter of fact, he did it frequently, but Kíster never answered him harshly; the good-natured young fellow was heartily de-

lighted that a desire for enlightenment was waking up in the man. Alas! Avdyéi Ivánovitch questioned Kíster not out of a desire for enlightenment, but just because he felt like it, God knows why! Perhaps he wished to ascertain by experiment what sort of a head he, Lutchkóff, had,—a stupid one, or merely an unpolished one.—"But I actually am stupid," he said to himself more than once, with a bitter grin, and suddenly straightened himself up stiffly, stared arrogantly and impudently about him, and smiled maliciously if he noticed some comrade lower his glance before his. "Just so, brother, my learned, cultured man . . . ." he whispered through his teeth. "Wouldst not thou like . . . . thou knowest what?"

The officers did not discuss the sudden friendship between Kíster and Lutchkóff long: they were used to the bully's peculiarities. "The devil has entered into compact with the infant!" they said. . . Kíster everywhere lauded his new friend fervently, and they did not contradict him, because they feared Lutchkóff; and Lutchkóff himself never mentioned Kíster's name before others, but dropped the acquaintance of the perfumed adjutant.

## II

The landed proprietors in southern Russia are very fond of giving balls, of inviting the officers

to their houses, and giving them their daughters in marriage. Ten versts from the village of Kirílovo dwelt precisely such a landed proprietor, a certain Mr. Perekátoff, the possessor of four hundred souls and a fairly spacious house. He had a daughter of seventeen, Máshenka, and a wife, Neníla Makárievna. Mr. Perekátoff had once served in the cavalry, but out of love for a country life, out of indolence, he had resigned and begun to live his own life quietly, after the manner of middle-class squires. Neníla Makárievna was descended in a not entirely legitimate manner from a distinguished boyár of Moscow.

Her protector reared his Nenílushka very carefully, as the saying is, in his own house, but got her off his hands with considerable haste, at the first demand, as uncertain wares. Neníla Makárievna was not comely; the distinguished gentleman gave her a dowry of ten thousand rubles, all told; she jumped at Mr. Perekátoff. Mr. Perekátoff thought it very flattering to himself to wed a cultured, clever young lady . . . . well, and to sum it up, one who also was related to a distinguished dignitary. That dignitary afforded the married pair his protection even after the wedding; that is to say, he accepted from them gifts of salted woodcock and addressed Perekátoff as, "thou, my good fellow," and sometimes simply as "thou." Neníla Maká-

rievna completely ruled her husband, managed affairs, and disposed of the entire estate,—very cleverly, by the way; in any case, far better than Mr. Perekátoff himself could have done. She did not oppress her spouse excessively, but kept him under her thumb, ordered his clothes herself, and dressed him in English fashion, as is befitting a country squire; by her command, Mr. Perekátoff cultivated on his chin a Spanish goatee, to conceal a large wart which resembled an overripe raspberry; Neníla Makárievna, on her side, was wont to inform her guests that her husband played the flute, and that all flute-players let the hair grow below their under lip; it was more convenient to hold the instrument. Mr. Perekátoff, from early morning, went about in a tall, clean neckerchief, with hair well brushed and face well washed. However, he was extremely well satisfied with his lot: he always had very savoury dinners, did whatever he wished, and slept as much as he could. Neníla Makárievna set up in her house "a foreign order of things," as the neighbours said: she kept few servants, and dressed them neatly. She was tortured with ambition; she wanted to become at least Marshaless of the Nobility for the county, but the nobles of the *** county, although they ate their fill at her house, nevertheless elected not her husband, but at one time retired Premier-Major Burcholtz, at another, Second-Major

Burundiukóff. Mr. Perekátoff seemed to them too citified a rogue.

Mr. Perekátoff's daughter Máshenka resembled her father in face. Neníla Makárievna had taken great pains with her education. She spoke French well, and played respectably on the piano. She was of medium height, quite plump and white; her rather chubby face was enlivened by a good-natured, merry smile; her chestnut hair, which was not too thick, her small brown eyes, her agreeable voice—everything about her pleased in a quiet way, and that was all. On the other hand, the absence of affectation, of prejudices, her erudition, which was remarkable in a maid of the steppes, her freedom of expression, the calm simplicity of her speech and glance evoked involuntary surprise. She had developed in freedom; Neníla Makárievna had not put any restraint upon her.

One morning, about twelve o'clock, the whole Perekátoff family was assembled in the drawing-room. The husband, in a green round dress-coat, a tall, checked stock, and yellowish-grey trousers with gaiters, was standing in front of the window, and catching flies with great assiduity. The daughter was sitting at her embroidery-frame; her small, plump hand in a black mitt rose and fell gracefully over the canvas. Neníla Makárievna sat on the couch and stared silently at the floor.

"Did you send invitations to the *** regiment, Sergyéi Sergyéevitch?"—she asked her husband.

"For this evening? Of course, *ma chère,* I sent them." (He was forbidden to call her mátushka.[1]) "Of course!"

"There are no cavaliers at all,"—went on Neníla Makárievna.—"There is no one for the young ladies to dance with."

Her husband sighed, as though the absence of cavaliers afflicted him.

"Mamma,"—said Másha, suddenly:—"is Monsieur Lutchkóff invited?"

"What Lutchkóff?"

"He is an officer also. They say he is very interesting."

"Really?"

"Yes; he is not good-looking, and not young, but every one is afraid of him. He is a frightful duellist." (Mamma frowned slightly.) "I should very much like to see him. . . ."

Sergyéi Sergyéevitch interrupted his daughter.

"What is there to see, my darling? Dost thou think that he looks like Lord Byron?" (At that epoch people had only just begun to talk about Lord Byron among us.)—"Nonsense! Why, my darling, I also bore the reputation of a swashbuckler in my day."

[1] *Mátushka* (literally, "dear little mother") is the genuine Russian form of address for any woman of any rank.—Translator.

Másha stared in amazement at her parent, broke out laughing, then sprang up and kissed him on the cheek. His spouse smiled slightly . . . . but Sergyéi Sergyéevitch had not lied.

"I don't know whether that gentleman will come,"—said Neníla Makárievna.—"Perhaps he also will favour us with his company."

The daughter heaved a sigh.

"Look out, don't fall in love with him,"—remarked Sergyéi Sergyéevitch.—"I know that all of you nowadays are such . . . . you see . . . . so given to raptures. . . ."

"No,"—returned Másha, artlessly.

Neníla Makárievna gazed coldly at her husband. Sergyéi Sergyéevitch toyed with his watch-chain in some confusion, took from the table his broad-brimmed English hat, and set off to attend to the estate. His dog ran timidly and submissively after him. Being a wise animal, it felt that its master had not much power in the house, and behaved itself modestly and cautiously.

Neníla Makárievna approached her daughter, gently lifted her head, and looked affectionately into her eyes.

"Thou wilt tell me when thou fallest in love?" she asked.

Másha, with a smile, kissed her mother's hand and nodded her head affirmatively several times.

"See that thou dost,"—remarked Neníla Ma-

kárievna, patting her cheek, and following her husband out of the room. Másha leaned against the back of her easy-chair, dropped her head on her breast, intertwined her fingers, and stared for a long time out of the window, narrowing her eyes. . . . A faint flush played over her rosy cheeks; with a sigh she straightened herself up, began to embroider, dropped her needle, propped her face on her hand, and lightly biting her finger-nails, fell into thought . . . . then glanced at her shoulder, at her outstretched hand, rose, went to the mirror, laughed, put on her hat, and went off into the park.

On that same evening, about eight o'clock, the guests began to assemble. Madame Perekátoff very amiably received and "entertained" the ladies, Máshenka the young girls; Sergyéi Sergyéevitch chatted with the landed proprietors about farming, and kept constantly glancing at his wife. The young dandies began to present themselves; also the officers, who had deliberately arrived as late as possible. At last the Colonel himself entered, escorted by his Adjutant, Kíster, and Lutchkóff. He presented them to the hostess. Lutchkóff bowed in silence; Kíster muttered the customary "Delighted." . . . . Mr. Perekátoff stepped up to the Colonel, shook hands cordially with him, and gazed feelingly into his eyes. The Colonel immediately knit his brows. The dancing began. Kíster invited

Máshenka. At that period the Écossaise was still flourishing.

"Tell me, please," Másha said to him when, after having galloped a score of times to the end of the hall, they had, at last, become the leading pair: "Why is not your friend dancing?"

"What friend?"

Másha indicated Lutchkóff with the tip of her fan.

"He never dances,"—replied Kíster.

"Then why did he come?"

Kíster was somewhat disconcerted.—"He wished to have the pleasure . . . ."

Máshenka interrupted him.—"You have recently been transferred to our regiment, I believe?"

"To *your* regiment?"—remarked Kíster, with a smile:—"Yes, recently."

"You are not bored here?"

"Good gracious . . . . no . . . I have found such agreeable society here . . . . and nature! . . . ." Kíster launched out into a description of nature. Másha listened to him without raising her head. Avdyéi Iványovitch was standing in the corner, and gazing indifferently at the dancers.

"How old is Mr. Lutchkóff?"—she suddenly inquired.

"Thirty . . . . thirty-five, I think,"—replied Kíster.

"They say he is a dangerous man . . . hot-tempered,"—hastily added Másha.

"He is rather irascible . . . . but he is a very fine man, nevertheless."

"They say that every one is afraid of him."

Kíster burst out laughing.

"And you?"

"He and I are friends."

"Really?"

"Your turn, your turn, your turn," was shouted at them from all sides. They gave a start, and began once more to gallop sideways the whole length of the hall.

"Well, I congratulate thee,"—said Kíster to Lutchkóff, approaching him after the dance:—"the daughter of the house has kept asking me incessant questions about thee."

"Is it possible?"—returned Lutchkóff, scornfully.

"On my word of honour! And she 's very pretty, you know; just look."

"But which one of them is she?"

Kíster pointed out Másha to him.

"Ah! not bad-looking!"—And Lutchkóff yawned.

"What a cold man!"—exclaimed Kíster, and ran off to invite another young girl.

Avdyéi Ivánovitch was greatly pleased with the information imparted by Kíster, although he did yawn, and even yawn pretty loudly. To

arouse curiosity flattered his self-love intensely; he despised love—in words . . . . but inwardly he felt that it would be a difficult and troublesome matter to make himself beloved. . . . Difficult and troublesome to make himself beloved,—but very easy to pretend to be an indifferent, reticent, haughty man. Avdyéi Ivánovitch was ill-favoured and not young; but, on the other hand, he enjoyed a terrible reputation—and, consequently, had a right to put on airs. He had become used to bitter and taciturn enjoyment of surly solitude; this was not the first time that he had attracted the attention of women; some had even tried to make friends with him, but he had repulsed them with obdurate stubbornness; he knew that tenderness was not becoming to his style (in hours of trysts and frankness he became first awkward and vulgar, and then, out of vexation, rough to the point of insipidity, of insult); he called to mind that two or three women, with whom he had once consorted, had cooled toward him immediately after the first moments of close acquaintance, and had hastily beaten a retreat from him . . . and therefore he had made up his mind, at last, to remain a riddle, and to scorn that which fortune had denied to him. . . . People, as a whole, know no other scorn, apparently. No frank, involuntary, that is to say, good manifestation of passion was becoming to Lutchkóff; he was forced continually to put a restraint on himself, even when he

was angry. Kíster alone was not disgusted when Lutchkóff burst into a guffaw of laughter; the eyes of the good German sparkled with the noble joy of sympathy, when he read to Avdyéi Ivánovitch his favourite pages from Schiller, and the bully sat in front of him, with head lowered like a wolf.

Kíster danced until he was ready to drop. Lutchkóff did not quit his corner, knit his brows in a frown, now and then darted a stealthy glance at Másha—and, on encountering her eyes, immediately imparted to his own an indifferent expression. Másha danced three times with Kíster. The enthusiastic young fellow excited her confidence. She chatted very merrily with him, but at heart he felt awkward. Lutchkóff engrossed her.

The mazurka thundered out. The officers began to leap, stamp their heels, and to toss their epaulets with their shoulders; the civilians stamped their heels also. Still Lutchkóff did not stir from his place, and slowly followed the couples with his eyes as they flitted past. Some one touched his sleeve . . . he glanced round; his neighbour directed his attention to Másha. She was standing in front of him, without raising her eyes, and offering him her hand.[1] Lutchkóff

[1] The mazurka, which is still a great favourite in Russia, greatly resembles the cotillon in everything except the steps, which (as the description above indicates) are vivacious. Both the cotillon and the mazurka are danced—one before, the other after, supper—at Court balls and other dances.—TRANSLATOR.

first stared at her in surprise, then indifferently removed his broadsword, threw his hat on the floor, awkwardly made his way among the armchairs, took Másha by the hand—and passed along the circle, without any skipping or stamping, as though unwillingly performing a disagreeable duty. . . Másha's heart beat violently.

"Why do you not dance?" she asked him at last.

"I don't like it,"—replied Lutchkóff.—"Where is your place?"

"Yonder, sir."

Lutchkóff led Másha to her chair, calmly made his bow to her, calmly returned to his corner . . . . but the bile stirred merrily within him.

Kíster invited Másha.

"What a strange man your friend is!"

"And he interests you very much" . . . . said Feódor Feódorovitch, roguishly screwing up his kind, blue eyes.

"Yes . . . he must be very unhappy."

"He unhappy? Where did you get that idea?"—And Feódor Feódorovitch burst out laughing.

"You don't know . . . you don't know. . ."—Másha shook her head gravely.

"But why should n't I know?"

Again Másha shook her head and cast a glance at Lutchkóff. Avdyéi Iványovitch noticed that glance, shrugged his shoulders imperceptibly, and went into another room.

## III

Several months passed after that evening. Lutchkóff had not been to the Perekátoffs' a single time. Kíster, on the other hand, had called on them quite often. Neníla Makárievna liked him, but it was not she who attracted Feódor Feódorovitch. He liked Másha. Being an inexperienced man, and one who had not exhausted his stock of talk, he found great pleasure in exchanging sentiments and opinions, and good-naturedly believed in the possibility of a calm and exalted friendship between a young man and a young girl.

One day, a tróïka of well-fed and spirited horses brought him with celerity to the house of Mr. Perekátoff. It was a summer day, stifling and sultry. There was not a cloud anywhere. The azure of the sky was thickened at the edges to such a degree that the eye took it for a thundercloud. The house built by Mr. Perekátoff for summer residence, with the customary forethought of the steppes, had its windows turned directly to the sun. Neníla Makárievna had ordered all the shutters to be closed early in the morning. Kíster entered the cool, shaded drawing-room. The light lay in long streaks on the floor, in short, frequent bands on the walls. The Perekátoff family welcomed Feódor Feódoro-

vitch cordially. After dinner, Neníla Makárievna took herself off to her own bedchamber for a nap; Mr. Perekátoff ensconced himself on a divan in the drawing-room; Másha seated herself at her embroidery-frame near the window; Kíster opposite her. Másha, without opening the frame, leaned her breast against it, and propped her head on her hands. Kíster began to narrate something to her; she listened to him inattentively, as though she were expecting something, occasionally glanced at her father, and suddenly stretched out her hand.

"Listen, Feódor Feódorovitch . . . . only, speak as softly as possible . . . . papa has fallen asleep."

Mr. Perekátoff had, in fact, according to his wont, fallen asleep as he sat on the divan, with his head thrown back, and his mouth slightly open.

"What do you wish?"—asked Kíster with curiosity.

"You will laugh at me."

"Mercy on us, what an idea!" . . . .

Másha dropped her head so that only the upper part of her face remained uncovered by her hands, and in an undertone, not without embarrassment, she asked Kíster: "why he never brought Mr. Lutchkóff with him?" This was not the first time Másha had mentioned him since the ball. . . . Kíster maintained silence. Másha

glanced timorously from behind her interlaced embroidery-frame.

"May I tell you my opinion frankly?"—Kíster asked her.

"Why not? Of course."

"It seems to me that Lutchkóff has made a great impression on you!"

"No!"—replied Másha, and bent forward, as though desirous of inspecting the pattern more closely; a slender golden strip of light lay on her hair:—"no . . . . but . . . ."

"But what?"—said Kíster with a smile.

"Why, you see,"—said Másha, and raised her head suddenly, so that the streak of light fell straight upon her eyes:—"you see . . . . he . . . ."

"He interests you. . . ."

"Well . . . . yes . . . ." said Másha, pausing between her words, blushed, turned away her head a little, and in that posture continued to speak:—"there is something about him that . . . . There now, you are laughing at me,"—she suddenly added, with a swift glance at Feódor Feódorovitch.

Feódor Feódorovitch smiled the gentlest of smiles.

"I tell you everything that comes into my head,"—pursued Másha:—"I know that you are my . . . ." (she meant to say "friend") "good friend."

Kíster bowed. Másha silently and timidly

extended her hand to him; Feódor Feódorovitch respectfully pressed the tips of her fingers.

"He must be a great eccentric,"—remarked Másha, and again set her elbows on her embroidery-frame.

"An eccentric?"

"Of course; it is as an eccentric that he interests me!"—added Másha, craftily.

"Lutchkóff is a noble, a remarkable man,"—replied Kíster, gravely.—"The men of our regiment do not know him, do not value him, and see in him only his external side. He is, of course, stubborn, strange, impatient, but he has a good heart."

Másha listened eagerly to Feódor Feódorovitch.

"I will bring him to you. I will tell him that there is no need to fear you, that it is ridiculous for him to be shy. . . . I will tell him . . . . Oh, yes! I know what I shall say. . . . That is, you must not think, nevertheless, that I . . . ." Kíster grew confused; Másha also was confused. . . . "Yes, and in short, you see, he only . . . interests you . . . . so . . . ."

"Well, of course, as many others interest me."

Kíster cast a roguish glance at her.

"Good, good,"—he said with an aspect of satisfaction:—"I will bring him to you. . . ."

"Why, no. . . ."

"Good; but I tell you that everything will be all right. . . . I 'll arrange it. . . ."

"What a man you are! . . ." remarked Másha, with a smile, shaking her finger at him. Mr. Perekátoff yawned and opened his eyes.

"Why, I do believe I 've been asleep?"—he muttered with surprise. This question and surprise were repeated every day. Másha and Kíster began a conversation about Schiller.

But Feódor Feódorovitch did not feel quite at his ease; envy seemed to have begun to stir within him . . . . and he was nobly indignant at himself. Neníla Makárievna entered the drawing-room. Tea was served. Mr. Perekátoff made his dog jump several times over a cane, and then announced that he had taught the dog himself, while the dog politely wagged his tail, licked his chops, and blinked. When, at last, the sultry heat had abated and the cool evening breeze had come up, the whole Perekátoff family set off for a stroll in the birch-grove. Feódor Feódorovitch kept casting incessant glances at Másha, as though he were desirous of giving her to understand that he would execute her commission; Másha felt vexed at herself, and gay, and somewhat daunted. Kíster suddenly, without rhyme or reason, began to talk in a decidedly lofty style about love in general, about friendship . . . . but, on observing Neníla Makárievna's clear and

attentive glance, he as suddenly changed the conversation.

The sunset glow blazed up brilliantly and splendidly. In front of the birch-coppice stretched a broad, level meadow. Másha took it into her head to play at tag. Maids and lackeys made their appearance. Mr. Perekátoff stood with his wife, Kíster with Másha. The maids ran with faint obsequious shrieks; Mr. Perekátoff's valet made so bold as to separate Neníla Makárievna from her husband; one maid respectfully surrendered to the master; Feódor Feódorovitch did not part from Másha. Every time that he resumed his place he said two or three words to her; Másha, all flushed with running, listened to him with a smile, and smoothed her hair with her hand. After supper, Kíster went away.

The night was calm and starry. Kíster doffed his cap. He was agitated; he had a slight lump in his throat. "Yes," he said at last, almost aloud, "she loves him; I will bring them together; I will justify her confidence." Although nothing, as yet, had proved any open inclination on Másha's part for Lutchkóff, although, according to her own words, he had merely aroused her curiosity, yet Kíster had already succeeded in composing for himself an entire romance, in prescribing his duty to himself. He made up his mind to sacrifice his own

feelings—the more so as, "with the exception of sincere affection, I really feel nothing, so far," he thought. Kíster really was capable of sacrificing himself to friendship, to an acknowledged duty. He had read a great deal, and therefore imagined that he was experienced and even penetrating; he did not doubt the truth of his assumptions; he did not suspect that life is infinitely varied and never repeats itself. Gradually, Feódor Feódorovitch attained to a state of rapture. He began, with emotion, to think of his mission. To be the mediator between a loving, timid young girl and a man who was, possibly, obdurate only because it had never happened to him a single time in life to love and to be loved; to bring them together, to interpret their own feelings to them, and then to withdraw, without allowing any one to perceive the magnitude of his sacrifice,—what a fine act! Despite the coolness of the night, the face of the kind dreamer was burning hot. . . .

Early in the morning, on the following day, he betook himself to Lutchkóff.

Avdyéi Ivánovitch, according to his wont, was lying on his divan and smoking a pipe. Kíster exchanged greetings with him.

"I was at the Perekátoffs' yesterday,"—he said with some solemnity.

"Ah!"—returned Lutchkóff, indifferently, with a yawn.

"Yes. They are very fine people."

"Really?"

"I talked with them about thee."

"Greatly honoured, I 'm sure; with whom, pray?"

"With the old people . . . . and with the daughter."

"Ah! with that . . . . fatty?"

"She 's a very fine girl, Lutchkóff."

"Well, yes, they 're all very fine, those girls."

"No, Lutchkóff, thou dost not know her. I never before have met so clever, kind, and sensitive a young girl."

Lutchkóff began to hum through his nose: "In the *Hamburg Gazette*—hast not thou read it?—how the year before last—Münich won the victory. . . ."[1]

"Yes, but I tell thee . . . ."

"Thou 'rt in love with her, Fédya,"—remarked Lutchkóff, with a sneer.

"Not at all. I never thought of such a thing."

"Fédya, thou 'rt in love with her!"

"What nonsense! Can't a fellow . . . ."

"Thou 'rt in love with her, thou friend of my heart, thou black-beetle that lodgest behind the oven,"—drawled Avdyéi Ivánovitch in a sing-song tone.

"Ekh, Avdyéi, shame on thee!"—said Kíster, with vexation.

[1] A fragment from an old song. Münich was a prominent general and statesman in the reign of Anna Ioánnovna, and during the regency of Anna Leopoldovna.—Translator.

With any other man, Lutchkóff would have sung on worse than ever; he did not tease Kíster. —"Well, well, *sprechen sie deutsch,* Iván Andréitch,"—he growled in an undertone:—"don't get angry."

"Listen, Avdyéi,"—said Kíster, with fervour, sitting down by his side.—"Thou knowest that I love thee." (Lutchkóff made a grimace.) "But one thing in thee does not please me, I admit . . . namely, that thou wilt have nothing to do with anybody, always sittest at home, and avoidest all intercourse with nice people. For there are nice people! Well, let us assume that thou hast been deceived in life, hast grown hard, or something of that sort; thou needst not fling thyself on everybody's neck; but why shouldst thou repudiate everybody? Why, if thou goest on like this, thou mayest drive me away also, one of these days."

Lutchkóff continued to smoke with cool indifference.

"That 's why nobody knows you . . . except me; any one else would think God knows what about thee. . . . Avdyéi!" added Kíster, after a brief silence:—"dost thou not believe in virtue, Avdyéi?"

"How can I help believing? . . . . Yes, I believe in it, . . ." said Lutchkóff.

Kíster pressed his hand with emotion.

"I want,"—he went on in a much moved voice, —"to reconcile thee with life. I 'm going to

make thee grow merry, blossom out . . . . precisely that—blossom out. How glad I shall be then! Only, thou must allow me to dispose of thee, of thy time, occasionally. What day is to-day? Monday. . . . To-morrow is Tuesday. On Wednesday, yes, on Wednesday, we will go to the Perekátoffs' together. They will be so delighted to see thee . . . and we shall pass the time so merrily . . there. . . . But now let me smoke a pipe."

Avdyéi Ivánovitch lay motionless on the divan and stared at the ceiling. Kíster lighted his pipe, walked to the window, and began to drum on the panes with his fingers.

"So they talked about me?"—asked Avdyéi, suddenly.

"Yes, they did," returned Kíster, significantly.

"What did they say?"

"Well, they talked. They are very anxious to make thine acquaintance."

"Who in particular?"

"Just see how curious he is!"

Avdyéi called his servant, and gave orders to have his horse saddled.

"Whither away?"

"To the riding-school."

"Well, good-bye. So we shall go to the Perekátoffs', shall we not?"

"Yes, if thou wishest,"—said Lutchkóff, indolently, stretching himself.

"That 's a fine fellow!"—exclaimed Kíster, and went out into the street, became pensive, and heaved a deep sigh.

## IV

Másha was walking to the door of the drawing-room when the arrival of Messrs. Kíster and Lutchkóff was announced. She immediately returned to her chamber, and made a movement to approach the mirror. . . . Her heart beat violently. A maid came to summon her to the drawing-room. Másha drank a little water, paused a couple of times on the stairs, and at last descended. Mr. Perekátoff was not at home. Neníla Makárievna was sitting on the divan; Lutchkóff was sitting in an arm-chair, in his uniform, with his hat on his knees; Kíster sat by his side. They both rose on Másha's entrance,—Kíster with his customary friendly smile, Lutchkóff with a stiff and solemn mien. She bowed to them both in confusion, and went to her mother. The first ten minutes passed off well. Másha drew breath once more, and began gradually to observe Lutchkóff. He replied to the hostess's questions briefly, but uneasily; he was intimidated, like all self-conscious people. Neníla Makárievna proposed to the guests that they should take a stroll in the park, but she herself went no further than the balcony. She did

not regard it as indispensable to keep an eye constantly on her daughter, and hobble about after her everywhere, with a plethoric reticule in her hands, after the example of many mothers of the steppes. The stroll lasted quite a long time. Másha talked chiefly with Kíster, but did not venture to look either at him or at Lutchkóff. Avdyéi Ivánovitch did not converse with her; emotion was discernible in Kíster's voice. For some reason he laughed and chattered a great deal. . . . They approached the river. A fathom distant from the shore grew a water-lily which seemed to be reposing on the smooth surface of the water, carpeted with its broad, round leaves.

"What a beautiful flower!" remarked Másha.

She had not finished uttering these words before Lutchkóff drew out his broadsword, grasped the slender branches of a willow with one hand and, bending over the water with his whole body, cut off the head of the flower. "The water is deep here, take care!" cried Másha in alarm. With the tip of his sword, Lutchkóff drew the flower ashore, at her very feet. She bent down, picked it up, and with tender, joyous surprise looked at Avdyéi.

"Bravo!"—cried Kíster.

"And I don't know how to swim, . . ." said Lutchkóff, abruptly.

Másha did not like this remark. "Why did he say that?" she thought.

Lutchkóff and Kíster remained at Mr. Pereká-toff's until the evening. Something new and unprecedented took place in Másha's soul; thoughtful perplexity was more than once depicted on her countenance. Somehow, she moved more slowly, did not flush at her mother's glances—on the contrary, she seemed to seek them, seemed herself to be interrogating her. During the entire course of the evening, Lutchkóff showed her a certain clumsy attention; but this very clumsiness pleased her innocent vanity. But when both of them had departed, with a promise to come again in a few days, she went softly to her chamber and gazed about her for a long time, as though in wonder. Neníla Makárievna came to her, kissed and embraced her, as was her habit. Másha opened her lips, tried to begin a conversation with her mother,—and did not utter a word. She wanted to make a confession, but did not know about what. On the night-stand, the flower plucked by Lutchkóff lay on the water in a clean glass. After she was in bed, Másha half rose, propped herself on her elbow, and her virgin lips softly touched the fresh white petals. . . .

"Well, how now?" Kíster asked his comrade on the following day:—"do you like the Perekátoffs? Was I right? Hey? Tell me!"

Lutchkóff made no answer.

"Come, tell me, tell me."

"Why, really, I don't know."

"Come, stop that!"

"That . . . . what the deuce is her name? . . . . that Máshenka—is all right; she is n't so ugly."

"Well, there, you see. . . ." said Kíster—and stopped short.

Five days later Lutchkóff himself suggested to Kíster that they should go to the Perekátoffs'. He would not have gone to them alone; in the absence of Feódor Feódorovitch he would have been obliged to carry on the conversation, and this he was unable to do, and avoided as much as possible.

Másha was much more at her ease when the friends arrived for the second time. She now secretly rejoiced that she had not worried her mother by an unasked confession. Before dinner, Avdyéi offered to mount a young, unbroken horse, and in spite of the animal's mad leaps, he tamed it completely. In the evening he began to unbend, set to joking and laughing —and although he speedily bethought himself, he had already contrived to produce a momentary disagreeable impression on Másha. She herself did not yet know precisely what feeling Lutchkóff had excited in her, but everything about him which did not please her she attributed to the influence of unhappiness, of solitude.

## V

The friends began to make frequent visits to the Perekátóffs'. Kíster's position became more and more burdensome. He did not repent . . . . no, but he wished, at least, to curtail the period of his trial. His attachment to Másha augmented with every day; she herself was well disposed toward him; but to be eternally nothing more than a mediator, a confidant, even a friend—is such a heavy, ungrateful rôle! Coldly enthusiastic people prate a vast deal about the sanctity of suffering, about the bliss of suffering . . . but sufferings afforded no bliss to Kíster's warm, simple heart. At last, one day, when Lutchkóff entered his room, already fully dressed, and the calash had driven up to the porch, Feódor Feódorovitch, to the amazement of his friend, declared flatly that he meant to remain at home. Lutchkóff entreated, grew vexed, waxed wrathful. . . . Kíster excused himself on the pretext of a headache. Lutchkóff set off alone.

The bully had changed in many ways of late. He left his comrades in peace, he did not harry the novices, and although he had not blossomed forth in soul, as Kíster had predicted that he would, still he really had quieted down. He could not have been called a disillusioned man previously,—he had seen almost nothing, and experienced al-

most nothing,—and therefore it is not remarkable that Másha should have occupied his thoughts. However, his heart had not grown softer; the bile in it had merely subsided. Másha's feelings toward him were of a strange nature. She hardly ever looked him straight in the face; she did not know how to chat with him. . . . But when they chanced to be left alone, Másha became frightfully embarrassed. She took him for a remarkable man, and was intimidated in his presence; she grew agitated, she imagined that she did not understand him, did not deserve his confidence; she thought of him in a cheerless, heavy way—but incessantly. Kíster's presence, on the contrary, was a relief to her, and disposed her to mirth, although it did not gladden or agitate her; with him she could chat for hours; leaning on his arm as on the arm of a brother, she gazed into his eyes in a friendly way; she laughed when he laughed—and rarely called him to mind. In Lutchkóff there was something mysterious for the young girl; she felt that his soul was dark "as the forest," and strove to penetrate into that mysterious gloom. . . . Exactly in this way do children gaze into a deep well, until at last they espy, at the very bottom, the motionless, black water.

When Lutchkóff entered the drawing-room alone, Másha was startled at first . . . . but afterward she rejoiced. It had already seemed

to her, more than once, that between Lutchkóff and herself there existed a certain misapprehension, that hitherto he had had no opportunity to explain himself. Lutchkóff communicated to her the cause of Kíster's absence; the old people expressed their sympathy; but Másha looked incredulously at Avdyéi, and suffered poignantly with anticipation. After dinner they were left alone; Másha did not know what to say, and seated herself at the piano; her fingers flew hastily and tremulously over the keys; she kept pausing constantly and waiting for the first word. Lutchkóff did not understand and did not like music. Másha began to talk to him about Rossini (Rossini had just come into fashion), about Mozart. . . . Avdyéi Iványovitch replied: "Yes, ma'am; no, ma'am; certainly, ma'am; very beautiful,"—and that was all. Másha began to play some brilliant variations on a theme by Rossini. Lutchkóff listened and listened, . . . . and when at last she turned toward him, his face expressed such unfeigned boredom that Másha instantly sprang to her feet and shut the piano with a bang. She walked to the window and stared for a long time into the park; Lutchkóff did not stir from his seat, and preserved silence. Impatience began to usurp the place of timidity in Másha's soul. "What is it?" she thought: "willst thou not, or canst thou not?" It was Lutchkóff's turn to feel timid. Again he felt

his usual torturing lack of confidence: he was already waxing wroth! . . . .

" 'T was the devil prompted me to get myself entangled with a wretched little girl," he muttered to himself. . . . And yet, how easy it was at that moment to touch Másha's heart! No matter what so remarkable, although so strange a man as she imagined Lutchkóff to be, had said, she would have understood all, excused all, believed all. . . . But that heavy, stupid silence! Tears of vexation welled up in her eyes.

" If he does not wish to explain himself, if I really am not worthy of his confidence, why does he come to our house? Or perhaps I do not know how to make him speak out. . . ." And she turned swiftly round, and looked at him in such an inquiring, such a persistent way that he could not fail to understand her glance, could no longer hold his peace. . . .

" Márya Sergyéevna!"—he ejaculated, stammering,—" I . . . . I have . . . . I must say something to you."

" Speak,"—returned Másha, swiftly.

Lutchkóff gazed about him irresolutely.

" I cannot now. . . ."

" Why? "

" I should like to have a talk with you . . . . in private. . . ."

" But we are alone now."

" Yes . . . but . . . . here in the house . . . ."

Másha was disconcerted. . . "If I refuse him,"—she thought,—"everything is at an end." . . . . Curiosity ruined Eve. . . . .

"I agree,"—she said at last.

"When? Where?"

Másha breathed hastily and unevenly.

"To-morrow . . . . evening. Do you know the coppice above the Long Meadow? . . ."

"Behind the mill?"

Másha nodded her head.

"At what o'clock?"

"Wait. . . . ."

She could not utter anything more; her voice broke . . . she turned pale, and hastily left the room.

A quarter of an hour later, Mr. Perekátoff, with the amiability characteristic of him, escorted Lutchkóff to the anteroom, pressed his hand with emotion, and begged him "not to forget them"; then, having seen his guest off, he remarked with dignity to his man that it would n't be a bad thing for him to cut his hair—and, without awaiting an answer, he returned to his chamber with an anxious air, and with the same anxious air seated himself on the divan, and immediately lapsed into innocent slumber.

"Thou art somewhat pale to-day,"—said Nenila Makárievna to her daughter on the evening of the same day.—"Art thou well?"

"I am well, mamma."

Neníla Makárievna adjusted her kerchief on her neck.

"Thou art very pale; look at me,"—she went on with that maternal anxiety, in which, nevertheless, parental authority is audible:—"there, now, and thine eyes are not merry. Thou art ill, Másha."

"I have a slight headache,"—said Másha, in order to make her escape in some way.

"There, now, I knew it."—Neníla Makárievna laid her hand on Másha's brow.—"But thou hast no fever."

Másha stooped down and picked up a thread from the floor.

Neníla Makárievna's arms were laid gently round Másha's slender waist.—"It seems as though thou art wishing to say something to me,"—she said affectionately, without unclasping her hands.

Másha shuddered inwardly.

"I? No, mamma."

Másha's momentary confusion did not escape the maternal notice.

"Really, thou art . . . . Just reflect."

But Másha had succeeded in regaining her composure, and, instead of a reply, she kissed her mother's hand with a laugh.

"And thou dost not mean to say that thou hast nothing to say to me?"

"Why, really, I have nothing."

"I believe thee,"—replied Neníla Makárievna,

after a brief silence.—"I know that thou hast no secrets from me. . . . Is n't that true?"

"Of course, mamma."

Yet Másha could not help blushing faintly.

"And thou doest well. It would be sinful for thee to have secrets from me. . . . For thou knowest how I love thee, Másha."

"Oh, yes, mamma!"

And Másha nestled up to her.

"Come, that will do; enough of that."—(Neníla Makárievna paced the room.)—"But, come, tell me,"—she continued in the voice of a person who is conscious that his question has no special significance:—"what wert thou talking about to-day with Avdyéi Ivánovitch?"

"With Avdyéi Ivánovitch?"—repeated Másha, calmly.—"Why, about everything. . . ."

"And dost thou like him?"

"Of course I do."

"And dost thou remember how anxious thou wert to make his acquaintance, how agitated thou wert?"

Másha turned away, and began to laugh.

"What a strange person he is!"—remarked Neníla Makárievna good-naturedly.

Másha wanted to take up the cudgels for Lutchkóff, but bit her little tongue.

"Yes, of course,"—she said with considerable carelessness:—"he is eccentric, but he is a fine man, nevertheless!"

"Oh, yes! . . . . Why did n't Feódor Feódorovitch come?"

"Evidently he was not well. Akh, yes! by the way: Feódor Feódorovitch wants to make me a present of a little dog. . . . Dost thou permit me?"

"What? To accept his gift?"

"Yes."

"Certainly."

"Well, thanks,"—said Másha.—"Thanks!"

Neníla Makárievna walked to the door, and suddenly turned back.

"And dost thou remember thy promise, Másha?"

"What promise?"

"Thou wert to tell me when thou shouldst fall in love."

"I remember."

"Well, what then? . . . Is n't it time yet?" (Másha uttered a ringing laugh.) "Come, look me in the eye."

Másha looked brightly and boldly at her mother.

"It cannot be!" thought Neníla Makárievna, and felt reassured.—"Why should she deceive me? . . . And what made me think so? . . . . She is still a perfect child. . . ."

She went away. . . .

"But, surely, this is a sin," thought Másha.

## VI

Kíster had already gone to bed when Lutchkóff entered his room. The bully's face never expressed a *single* feeling; so it was now also:—feigned indifference, coarse joy, the consciousness of his superiority . . . a multitude of varied feelings played over his features.

"Well, what now? Well, what now?"—Kíster hastily asked him.

"Well, what indeed! I have been there. They sent their greetings to thee."

"And are they all well?"

"What should ail them?"

"Did they inquire why I did not come?"

"Yes, they inquired, I believe."

Lutchkóff stared at the ceiling and began to sing in a falsetto voice. Kíster dropped his eyes, and became pensive.

"And see here now,"—enunciated Lutchkóff, in a hoarse, sharp voice:—"here, thou art a clever fellow, a learned fellow, and, as a matter of course, thou also talkest nonsense on occasion, begging pardon for the expression."

"What then?"

"Why, this. On the subject of women, for example. How thou dost laud them! Thou readest verses about them! To thee all of them are angels. . . Nice angels!"

"I love and revere women, but . . . ."

"Well, of course, of course,"—Avdyéi interrupted him.—"I 'm not disputing with thee, seest thou. Why should I? I 'm a plain man, of course."

"I meant to say that. . . . But why dost thou, to-day in particular . . . . precisely at this time . . . . begin to talk about women?"

"Because!"—Avdyéi smiled significantly.—"Because!"

Kíster cast a penetrating glance at his friend. He thought (pure soul!) that Másha had been treating him badly; perhaps she had even tormented him, as women only know how to torment. . . .

"Thou art embittered, my poor Avdyéi, confess. . . ."

Lútchkóff roared with laughter.

"Well, there 's nothing for me to feel embittered about, apparently,"—he said, with pauses between his words, as he stroked his moustache complacently.

"No; see here, now, Fédya,"—he continued in a hortatory tone:—"I 'd just like to remark to thee that thou art mistaken on the score of women, my friend. Believe me, Fédya, they 're all alike. All one has to do is to put himself to a little trouble, to hover about them a bit, and the business is as good as done. Now, take Másha Perekátoff, for instance. . . ."

"Well!"

Lutchkóff tapped the floor with his foot, and wagged his head.

"What is there particular and attractive about me, hey? Nothing, apparently. Nothing, is there? And yet a tryst has been appointed to me for to-morrow."

Kíster half rose, propped himself on his elbow, and stared at Lutchkóff in amazement.

"At evening, in the grove . . . ." pursued Avdyéi Ivánovitch calmly.—"But don't think any wrong of it. I only did it so—because. I 'm bored, seest thou. She 's a very pretty little girl . . . . well, thinks I to myself, what 's the harm? As for marrying her, I sha'n't do that . . . . but just to recall the pleasures of my youth. I 'm not fond of fooling round with women,—but one may amuse a wench. We 'll listen to the nightingales together. That is, in reality, thy business; but, seest thou, that female has n't any eyes. What am I, I 'd like to know, in comparison with thee?"

Lutchkóff talked for a long time. But Kíster did not listen to him. His head was reeling. He turned white, and passed his hand over his face. Lutchkóff wriggled about in his arm-chair, half-closed his eyes, stretched himself,—and attributing Kíster's emotion to jealousy, almost choked with satisfaction. But Kíster was not tormented with jealousy: he was pained, not by the avowal

itself, but by Avdyéi's coarse thoughtlessness, his indifferent and scornful way of speaking about Másha. He continued to gaze intently at the bully—and, apparently, for the first time thoroughly scanned his features. So it was for this he had taken so much pains! So it was for this that he had sacrificed his own inclination! Here it was—the gracious action of love!

"Avdyéi . . . is it possible that thou dost not love her?"—he stammered out at last.

"Oh, innocence! Oh, Arcadia!"—retorted Avdyéi, with a malicious guffaw.

Even then the good Kíster did not give up: "Perhaps," he said to himself, "Avdyéi is incensed, and is 'putting on airs,' according to his wont" . . . . he found no new words wherewith to express his sentiments. And was not there another feeling concealed in him—in Kíster—beneath his indignation? Was it not because the matter concerned Másha that Lutchkóff's confession had struck him so unpleasantly? How did he know—perhaps Lutchkóff really was in love with her? . . . But no! No! A thousand times no! That man in love? . . . That detestable man, with his bilious and sallow face, with his spasmodic and cat-like movements, and his throat swelling with delight . . . . disgusting! No, not with such words would Kíster have uttered to his devoted friend the secret of his love. . . . . In excess of happiness, with dumb rap-

ture, with brilliant, copious tears in his eyes, he would have clasped him to his breast.

"Well, brother?"—said Avdyéi: "thou didst not expect this—admit it! And now thou art vexed? Hey? Thou art envious? Confess, Fédya! Hey? Hey? For, seest thou, I 've snatched the wench away from under thy very nose!"

Kíster wanted to express his feelings, but turned his face to the wall.—"Explain myself . . . . before him? Not on any account!" he whispered to himself. "He does not understand me . . . . let it go! He takes it for granted that there are only vile feelings in me—let him! . . . ."

Avdyéi rose.

"I see that thou art sleepy,"—he said with feigned sympathy:—"I will not hinder thee. Sleep peacefully, my friend . . . . sleep!"

And Lutchkóff left the room, extremely pleased with himself.

Kíster could not get to sleep until daybreak. With feverish persistency he turned over and thought over one and the same thought—an occupation but too familiar to unhappy lovers; it acts on the soul like bellows on smouldering coals.

"Even if Lutchkóff is indifferent to her," he thought:—"even if she has thrown herself at his head, nevertheless, he ought not to have spoken so disrespectfully, so insultingly of her even to me, to his friend! How is she to blame? How

can one help pitying the poor, inexperienced young girl?

"But can it be that she has appointed a tryst with him? She has—she really has. Avdyéi is not lying; he never lies. But perhaps it is only a fancy on her part. . . .

"But she does not know him. . . . He is capable of insulting her, I think. After what has happened to-day, I can answer for nothing. . . . And was n't it you yourself, Mr. Kíster, who lauded and exalted him? Was n't it you yourself who excited her curiosity? . . . But who could have known? Who could have foreseen this? . . .

"Foreseen what? Is it long since he ceased to be my friend? . . . But enough of that; has he ever been my friend? What a disenchantment! What a lesson!"

The whole past gyrated in a whirlwind before Kíster's eyes. "Yes, I have loved him," he whispered at last.—"Why have I ceased to love him? So speedily? . . . . And have I ceased to love him? No. Why did I take a fancy to him? I alone?"

Kíster's loving heart had attached itself to Avdyéi precisely because all the others shunned him. But the kind young man did not himself know how great was his kindness.

"It is my duty"—he went on—"to warn Márya Sergyéevna. But how? What right have

I to meddle in other people's affairs, in other people's love? How do I know what sort of love it is? Perhaps, even in Lutchkóff himself . . . . . No!" he said aloud, with vexation, almost with tears, as he adjusted his pillows:—"that man is a stone. . . .

"I myself am to blame. . . . I have lost my friend. . . . A nice friend! And she is nice! . . . What a hateful egoist I am! No! No! From the depths of my soul I wish them happiness. . . . Happiness! and he jeers at her! . . . And why does he dye his moustache? Really, now, it seems as though . . . . Akh, how ridiculous I am!"—he kept repeating to himself, as he fell asleep.

## VII

The next morning Kíster drove to the Perekátoffs'. When they met, Kíster perceived a great change in Másha, and Másha also found him changed; but both held their peace. They both felt awkward the whole morning, contrary to their wont. At home Kíster had prepared a large stock of ambiguous speeches and hints, of friendly counsels . . . . but all these preparations proved to be utterly useless. Másha dimly felt that Kíster was watching her; it seemed to her that he intentionally uttered some words in a significant manner; but she also felt conscious

of the existence of agitation within herself, and did not trust her observations. "I do hope he will not take it into his head to stay until evening!" she kept incessantly thinking, and she tried to make him understand that he was not wanted. On his side, Kíster accepted her awkwardness, her trepidation, for visible tokens of love, and the more he feared for her, the less could he make up his mind to speak of Lutchkóff, while Másha persistently abstained from alluding to him. Poor Feódor Feódorovitch was in a painful position. He had begun, at last, to understand his own feelings. Never had Másha appeared to him more charming. Evidently, she had not slept all night. A slight flush had started forth in blotches on her pale face; her form was slightly bowed; an involuntary, languid smile never left her lips; now and then a shiver ran over her shoulders, which had grown pallid; her glances kindled softly and swiftly died out. . . Neníla Makárievna sat down beside them and, possibly with deliberate intent, mentioned Avdyéi Ivánovitch. But Másha, in the presence of her mother, was armed *jusqu'aux dents,* as the French say, and did not betray herself in the least. Thus passed the whole morning.

"You will dine with us?"—Neníla Makárievna asked Kíster.

Másha turned away.

"No,"—enunciated Kíster, hastily, with a

glance at Másha.—"You must excuse me . . . the obligations of the service. . ."—Neníla Makárievna expressed her regret, as was proper; following her example, Mr. Perekátoff expressed something or other. "I do not wish to be in any one's way," Kíster wanted to say to Másha, as he passed her, but instead, he bent forward and whispered: "May you be happy . . . farewell . . . beware . . ." and disappeared.

Másha heaved a sigh from the bottom of her soul, and then felt frightened at his departure. What was it that was torturing her? Love or curiosity? God knows; but we repeat: curiosity was sufficient to ruin Eve.

## VIII

A BROAD, level field on the right side of the little river Snyézhinka, about a verst distant from the Perekátoffs' estate, bore the name of Long Meadow. The left bank, all covered with thick, young oak-scrub, rose steeply above the river, which was almost overgrown with willow-bushes, with the exception of small "creeks," the haunt of wild ducks. Half a verst from the river, in this same Long Meadow, began sloping, undulating hillocks, here and there studded with ancient birches, hazel- and viburnum-bushes.

The sun had set. A mill was whirring and clattering in the distance, now loudly, now more

softly, according to the wind. The gentry's drove of horses was wandering idly through the meadow; the shepherd was strolling along, singing, behind his greedy and timorous sheep; the sheep-dogs were chasing crows out of pure tedium. Through the grove, with his arms folded, strode Lutchkóff. More than once already his tethered horse had responded impatiently to the ringing neighs of the colts and mares. Avdyéi was raging and quailing, as was his wont. Still unconvinced of Másha's love, he was already furiously angry with her, and irritated at himself . . . . but the emotion in him overwhelmed the vexation. He halted at last, in front of a wide-spreading hazel-bush, and began with his riding-whip to flick off the outermost leaves. . . .

He heard a faint noise . . . . he raised his head. . . . Ten paces from him stood Másha, all rosy with her swift walk, wearing a hat but no gloves, in a white gown, with a kerchief hastily knotted about her neck. She hastily dropped her eyes and swayed softly.

Avdyéi approached her clumsily and with a constrained smile.

"How happy I am . . ." he was beginning, almost inaudibly.

"I am very glad . . . . to meet you, . . ." Másha interrupted him, panting.—"I generally take a stroll here in the evening . . . . and you . . . ."

But Lutchkóff did not even understand how to spare her modesty, to back up her innocent lie.

"I think, Márya Sergyéevna,"—he said with dignity,—"that you yourself were pleased to . . ."

"Yes . . . . yes . . . ." returned Másha, hastily. "You wished to see me; you wanted to . . . ." Her voice had died away.

Lutchkóff maintained silence. Másha timidly raised her eyes.

"Excuse me," he began, without looking at her:—"I am a plain man and am not in the habit of explaining myself . . . . with ladies. . . . . I . . . . wanted to speak to you . . . . but, you are not inclined to listen to me, I think. . . ."

"Speak. . . ."

"You command. . . . Well, then, I will say to you frankly, that this long time, ever since I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance . . . ."

Avdyéi paused. Másha waited for him to finish his speech.

"However, I do not know why I am saying all this to you. . . . One cannot alter his fate. . . ."

"How do you know? . . ."

"I do know!"—responded Avdyéi, gloomily. —"I am accustomed to encounter its blows!"

It seemed to Másha that now, at least, Lutchkóff had no occasion to complain of his fate.

"There are kind people in the world,"—she remarked with a smile:—"even too kind. . . ."

"I understand you, Márya Sergyéevna, and, believe me, I know how to value your affection. . . . . I . . . . I . . . . You will not be angry?"

"No. . . . What is it that you wish to say?"

"I wish to say . . . . that I like you . . . . Márya Sergyéevna . . . . that I like you very much. . . ."

"I am very grateful to you,"—Másha interrupted him in confusion; her heart contracted with anticipation and with terror.—"Akh, look, Mr. Lutchkóff,"—she went on,—"look, what a view!"

She pointed to the meadow, all streaked with long, evening shadows, all crimson in the sunlight.

Inwardly delighted at the unexpected change in the conversation, Lutchkóff began to "admire" the view. He was standing by Másha's side. . . .

"Do you love nature?"—she suddenly asked, swiftly turning her head and looking at him with that friendly, curious and soft glance which, like a ringing voice, is given only to young girls.

"Yes . . . nature . . . . of course . . . ." stammered Avdyéi.—"Of course . . . . it is pleasant to stroll in the evening, although, I must

confess, that I am a soldier, and softness is n't in my line."

Lutchkóff was given to frequently repeating that he was a " soldier." A brief silence ensued. Másha continued to gaze at the meadow.

" Shall not I go away? "—thought Avdyéi.—" What nonsense! Be bolder! . . . Márya Sergyéevna . . . ."—he began with a fairly firm voice.

Másha turned her head.

" Excuse me,"—he began, as though jesting: —" but permit me on my side to inquire what you think of me; whether you feel any . . . . you know . . . . inclination toward my person? "

" Good heavens, how clumsy he is! " said Másha to herself.—" Do you know, Mr. Lutchkóff," —she answered him with a smile,—" that it is not always easy to give a definite reply to a definite question? "

" But . . . ."

" But why do you ask? "

" Why, good gracious, I want to know. . . ."

" But . . . . is it true that you are a great duellist? Tell me, is it true? "—said Másha, with timid curiosity.—" They say that you have killed more than one man already."

" That has happened,"—returned Avdyéi, indifferently, and stroked his moustache.

Másha gazed intently at him.

" With this hand here . . . ." she whispered.

In the meantime, the blood had begun to wax hot in Lutchkóff. For more than a quarter of an hour already a pretty young girl had been moving about before him. . . .

"Márya Sergyéevna,"—he began again in a sharp, strange voice,—"you know my feelings now, you know why I wished to see you. . . . You have been so kind. . . . Now do you tell me, at last, what I may hope for. . . ."

Másha was twirling a wild pink in her hands. . . . . She darted a sidelong glance at Lutchkóff, blushed, smiled, and said:—"What nonsense you are talking!" and gave him the flower.

Avdyéi seized her hand.

"So you love me!"—he exclaimed.

Másha turned cold all over with terror. She had had no thought of confessing love to Avdyéi; she herself did not yet know for a surety whether she loved him, and here he was forestalling her, forcibly making her speak out—he could not have understood her. . . . This thought flashed through Másha's mind more quickly than lightning. She had not in the least expected so speedy a conclusion. . . . Másha, like a curious child, had been asking herself all day: "Is it possible that Lutchkóff loves me?" She had been dreaming of a pleasant evening stroll, tender and respectful speeches; she had mentally coquetted, had tamed her savage, had permitted him, at

parting, to kiss her hand . . . . and instead of that . . . .

Instead of that, she suddenly felt Avdyéi's stiff moustache on her cheek. . . .

"Let us be happy," he whispered:—"for there is but one happiness on earth! . . . ."

Másha shuddered, sprang aside in affright, all pale, and halted, with her hand resting against a birch-tree. Avdyéi was terribly confused.

"Forgive me,"—he stammered, moving toward her:—"I really did not think . . . ."

Másha stared at him in silence, with all her eyes. . . . .

His lips curled in a disagreeable smile . . . . red spots started out on his face. . . .

"What are you afraid of?"—he went on. "What a fuss about nothing! For between us everything is already . . . . you know . . . ."

Másha made no reply.

"Come, stop that! . . . . What folly is this? It 's only . . . ."

Lutchkóff stretched out his hand toward her. . .

Másha recalled Kíster and his "Beware!" nearly fainted with terror, and began to scream in a decidedly shrill voice:

"Tániusha!"

From behind a hazel-bush popped forth the round face of her maid. . . . Avdyéi completely lost himself. Reassured by the presence of her servant, Másha did not stir from the spot. But

the bully began to quiver all over with a fit of wrath; his eyes grew narrow; he clenched his fists, and began to laugh loudly and convulsively.

"Bravo! Bravo! 'T is clever—there 's no denying that!"—he shouted.

Másha was petrified.

"I see that you have taken all measures of precaution, Márya Sergyéevna! Precaution never comes amiss. Who ever heard of such a thing? Nowadays the young ladies are more sharp-sighted than the old men. There 's love for you!"

"I do not know, Mr. Lutchkóff, who has given you the right to speak of love . . . . of what sort of love?"

"Who, did you say? Why, you yourself!" —Lutchkóff interrupted her.—There it was again: he was conscious that he was ruining the whole business, but he could not restrain himself.

"I have acted thoughtlessly,"—said Másha. . . . "I condescended to your entreaty with confidence in your *délicatesse* . . . . but you do not understand French—in your courtesy. . . ."

Avdyéi turned pale. Másha had struck him straight in the heart!

"I don't understand French . . . possibly; but I do understand . . . . I do understand that it has pleased you to make sport of me."

"Not at all, Avdyéi Ivánovitch. . . . I am even very sorry for you."

"Please do not talk about your compassion," —Avdyéi interrupted her testily:—"you may, at least, spare me that!"

"Mr. Lutchkóff . . . ."

"And be so good as not to look like a duchess. . . 'T is labour wasted! You can't frighten me!"

Másha retreated a pace, wheeled swiftly round, and walked away.

"Do you command me to send you your friend, your shepherd, the sentimental Lovey-dovey Kíster?"—Avdyéi shouted after her. He had lost his head.—"Is n't he thy friend? . . . ."

Másha did not answer him, and beat a hasty, a joyful retreat. She felt at ease, in spite of the alarm and agitation. She seemed to have awakened from a painful dream, to have emerged from a dark chamber into the air and sunlight. . . . Avdyéi, like a fanatic, stared around him, with dumb rage broke off a young sapling, sprang on his horse, and dug his spurs into it so viciously, so pitilessly twisted and tugged at the bridle, that the unhappy animal, after galloping eight versts in a quarter of an hour, came near dying that same night. . .

Kíster waited in vain until midnight for Lutchkóff, and on the following morning he went to him. The orderly informed Feódor Feódorovitch that his master was asleep, and had given orders that no one was to be admitted.

"Not even me?"—"Not even your Well-Born."—Kíster walked the length of the street twice in torturing uneasiness, then went home. His man handed him a note.

"From whom is it?"

"From the Perekátoffs, sir. Artyómka, the valet, brought it."

Kíster's hands trembled.

"They ordered their compliments to be presented to you. They requested an answer. Do you command that vodka be given to Artyómka, sir?"

Kíster slowly unfolded the note, and read the following:

DEAR, KIND FEÓDOR FEÓDOROVITCH!

I want very, very much to see you. Come to-day, if you can. Do not refuse my request, I beg of you, in the name of our old friendship. If you only knew . . . . but you shall know all. *Au revoir*—is it not?

MARIE.

P. S. Be sure to come to-day.

"And do you command, sir, that vodka be given to Artyómka, the valet?"

Kíster stared for a long time, with amazement, into his man's face, and left the room without uttering a word.

"The master has commanded to give thee vodka, and has commanded me to have a drink with thee,"—said Kíster's man to Artyómka, the valet.

## IX

When Kíster entered the drawing-room, Másha came to meet him with so bright and noble a face, pressed his hand so firmly and in so friendly a manner, that his heart began to beat violently with joy, and a stone was rolled away from his breast. But Másha said not a word to him, and immediately left the room. Sergyéi Sergyéevitch was sitting on the divan, and laying out a game of patience. A conversation began. Before Sergyéi Sergyéevitch had managed, according to his habit, to bring the subject round to his dog in circuitous fashion, Másha re-entered with a plaid silk sash on her gown,—Kíster's favourite sash. Neníla Makárievna made her appearance and welcomed Feódor Feódorovitch cordially. At dinner they all laughed and jested; even Sergyéi Sergyéevitch grew animated, and narrated one of the merriest pranks of his boyhood,—and as he did so, he hid his head from his wife, like an ostrich.

"Let us go for a walk, Feódor Feódorovitch,"—said Másha to Kíster after dinner, with that affectionate authority in her voice which seems to know that you will be glad to obey it.—"I must have a chat with you about an important, a very important matter,"—she added, with graceful solemnity, as she drew on her

suède gloves.—"Wilt thou come with us, *maman?*"

"No,"—replied Neníla Makárievna.

"But we will not go into the park."

"Where then?"

"To the Long Meadow, to the grove."

"Take Tániusha with you."

"Tániusha, Tániusha!"—cried Másha, ringingly, as she fluttered out of the room more lightly than a bird.

A quarter of an hour later Másha was walking with Kíster in the Long Meadow. As they passed the herd, she fed her favourite cow with bread, patted her head, and made Kíster pet her. Másha was merry, and chattered a great deal. Kíster willingly fell in with her mood, although he was impatiently awaiting an explanation. . . . . Tániusha walked behind at a respectful distance, and only now and then cast a sly glance at her young mistress.

"You are not vexed with me, Feódor Feódorovitch?"—asked Másha.

"At you, Márya Sergyéevna? Good heavens, for what?"

"Day before yesterday . . . do you remember?"

"You were out of sorts . . . . that is all."

"Why are we walking apart? Give me your arm. There, that 's right. . . And you were out of sorts, too."

"So I was."

"But to-day I am in good spirits, am I not?"

"Yes, to-day I think you are. . . ."

"And do you know why? Because . . ."—Másha nodded her head gravely.—"Well, I know why. . . . Because I am with you,"—she added, without looking at Kíster.

Kíster gently pressed her arm.

"But why don't you question me? . . ." said Másha in a low voice.

"What about?"

"Come, don't pretend . . . . about my letter."

"I was waiting. . . ."

"That 's why I feel so cheerful with you,"—Másha interrupted him with vivacity:—"because you are a kind, tender man; because you are incapable of . . . *parce que vous avez de la délicatesse.* One can say that to you; you understand French."

Kíster did understand French, but he positively did not understand Másha.

"Pluck that flower for me—that one yonder . . . how pretty it is!"—Másha admired it, and all of a sudden, swiftly freeing her arm, she began, with an anxious smile, cautiously to thrust the supple stem through the buttonhole of Kíster's coat. Her slender fingers almost touched his lips. He gazed at those fingers, then at her. She nodded her head, as much as to say: "You may . . ." Kíster bent down, and kissed the tips of her gloves. . .

In the meantime, they had drawn near the familiar grove. Másha suddenly became more pensive, and at last fell silent altogether. They came to the very spot where Lutchkóff had waited for her. The trampled grass had not yet succeeded in lifting itself; the broken sapling had already withered, its leaves had already begun to curl up into tubes and dry. Másha swept a glance around, and suddenly turned to Kíster.

"Do you know why I have brought you hither?"

"No, I do not know."

"You don't know? . . . Because you have said nothing to me to-day about your friend Mr. Lutchkóff. You have always praised him. . . ."

Kíster dropped his eyes and remained silent.

"Do you know,"—enunciated Másha, not without an effort:—"that I appointed with him . . . a tryst . . . . here . . . yesterday evening?"

"I knew it,"—replied Kíster, dully.

"You knew it? . . . Ah! now I understand why, the day before yesterday . . . . Mr. Lutchkóff, evidently, made haste to boast of his *conquest.*"

Kíster made an attempt to reply. . . .

"Don't speak; don't make me any answer. . . . . I know—he is your friend; you are capable of defending him. You knew, Kíster, you knew. . . How is it that you did not prevent

my perpetrating such a piece of folly? Why did n't you pull my ears, as though I had been a child? You knew . . . . and you did not care?"

"But what right had I? . . ."

"What right! . . . . The right of a friend. But he is your friend. . . . I am ashamed, Kíster. . . He is your friend. . . That man treated me yesterday so . . . ."

Másha turned away. Kíster's eyes flashed; he turned pale.

"Come, enough, don't get angry. . . . Do you hear me, Feódor Feódorovitch, don't get angry. Everything is for the best. I am very glad of yesterday's explanation . . . precisely that—explanation,"—added Másha.—"For what purpose, think you, have I spoken to you about this? In order to complain of Mr. Lutchkóff? Not at all! I have forgotten all about him. But I am to blame toward you, my kind friend. . . I want to explain myself, to beg your forgiveness . . . your advice. You have taught me to be frank; I am at my ease with you. . . . You are not a Mr. Lutchkóff!"

"Lutchkóff is awkward and rough,"—said Kíster with difficulty:—"but . . ."

"What is that *but?* Are n't you ashamed to say '*but*'? He is rough, *and* awkward, *and* malicious, *and* self-conceited. . . *And,* do you hear? not *but.*"

"You are speaking under the influence of wrath, Márya Sergyéevna,"—said Kíster, sadly.

"Wrath? What sort of wrath? Look at me: is this the way people look when they are wrathful? Listen,"—pursued Másha:—"think of me as you will . . . . but if you imagine that I am coquetting to-day with you out of revenge, then—then . . . ." Tears welled up in her eyes:—"Then I shall be seriously angry."

"Be frank with me, Márya Sergyéevna. . . ."

"Oh, you stupid man! Oh, dull-witted one! Why, look at me. Am not I frank with you? Don't you see through and through me?"

"Very well . . . . yes; I believe you,"—went on Kíster with a smile, seeing with what anxious persistence she sought his gaze;—"but come now, tell me, what prompted you to appoint a meeting with Lutchkóff?"

"What? I don't know myself. He wanted to talk with me alone. It seemed to me that he had not yet had time, or the opportunity to say all he wished. Now he has spoken out! Listen! Perhaps he is a remarkable man, but he is—stupid; really he is. . . He does n't know how to utter two words. He 's—downright discourteous. However, I do not blame him so very much . . . he may have thought that I was a giddy, crazy little girl. I had hardly ever talked with him. . . . . He really did arouse my curiosity, but I

imagined that a man who deserved to be your friend . . . ."

" Please do not speak of him as my friend,"—Kíster interrupted her.

" No, no, I don't want to bring about a quarrel between you."

" Oh, my God, for your sake I am ready to sacrifice not only my friend, but even . . . . Between me and Mr. Lutchkóff all is at an end!" —added Kíster, hastily. Másha gazed intently into his face.

" Well, I 've done with him!"—said she.— " Let us not talk of him. It is a lesson to me for the future. I myself am to blame. For several months in succession I have seen almost every day a kind, clever, merry, affectionate man, who . . . ." Másha became confused and hesitated:—" who, I think, also . . . liked me . . . a little . . . and I, the stupid,"—she added quickly,—" preferred to him . . . . no, no, did not prefer, but . . . ."

She bent her head, and fell silent with confusion.

Kíster was startled.—" It cannot be!"—he kept reiterating to himself.

" Márya Sergyéevna!"—he said at last.

Másha raised her head and let her eyes rest on him, burdened with unshed tears.

" You do not guess of whom I am speaking?" she asked.

Hardly breathing, Kíster extended his hand. Másha immediately grasped it with fervour.

"You are my friend, as before, are you not?" . . . Why do not you answer?"

"I am your friend, you know that,"—he stammered.

"And you do not condemn me? . . . you understand me? You will not laugh at a girl who yesterday appointed a rendezvous for one man, and to-day is already talking with another as I am talking with you. . . . You will not laugh at me, will you?" . . . Másha's face reddened; with both hands she clung to Kíster's hand. . . .

"Laugh at you,"—replied Kíster:—"I . . . . I . . . . why, I love you . . . . I love you!"—he exclaimed.

Másha covered her face.

"Is it possible that you have not known this long time, Márya Sergyéevna, that I love you?"

## X

THREE weeks after this interview, Kíster was sitting alone in his room, and writing the following letter to his mother:

DEAR MAMMA:

I hasten to share with you a great joy; I am going to be married. This news will probably surprise you only because, in my previous letters, I have not even

hinted at such a grave change in my life,—but you know that I am in the habit of sharing with you all my feelings, my joys and my sorrows. It is easy for me to explain to you the cause of my silence. In the first place, I only recently learned myself that I am beloved; and, in the second place, on my side, I as recently felt the full power of my own attachment. In one of my first letters from here, I spoke to you of the Perekátoffs, our neighbours; I am going to marry their only daughter, Márya. I am firmly convinced that we shall both be happy; she has excited in me not a momentary passion, but a deep, genuine feeling, in which friendship is combined with love. Her cheerful, gentle disposition entirely corresponds to my inclinations. She is cultured, clever, plays beautifully on the piano. . . . If you could only see her!! I send you her portrait, sketched by myself. It is unnecessary to say, I think, that she is a hundred times better than her portrait. Másha already loves you like a daughter, and is impatiently awaiting the day of meeting you. I intend to retire from the service, settle down in the country, and busy myself with agriculture. The old man Perekátoff has four hundred serfs in excellent condition. You see, that from the material point of view also, it is impossible not to laud my decision. I shall get a leave of absence, and go to Moscow and to you. Expect me a fortnight hence, not later. My dear, good mamma —how happy I am! . . . . Embrace me". . . . and so forth.

Kíster folded and sealed his letter, rose, went to the window, lighted his pipe, reflected a while,

and returned to the table. He got a small sheet of paper, carefully dipped his pen in the ink, but for a long time did not begin to write, contracted his brows, raised his eyes to the ceiling, nibbled the end of his pen. . . . At last he made up his mind—and in the course of a quarter of an hour, he had composed the following missive:

Dear Sir,

Avdyéi Ivánovitch:

Ever since the day of your last call (that is to say, for the last three weeks), you have not bowed to me, have not spoken to me, and seem to avoid meeting me. Every man is, indisputably, free to act as he likes; it has suited you to break off our acquaintance—and I, believe me, am not appealing to you with a complaint against you; I have no intention, and am not accustomed to force myself on any one whomsoever; the consciousness of my own uprightness is sufficient for me. I write to you now from a sense of duty. I have proposed to Márya Sergyéevna Perekátoff, and have received her consent, and also the consent of her parents. I impart this information—directly and immediately to *you*, with a view to avoiding all misunderstandings and suspicions. I frankly confess to you, my dear sir, that I cannot care overmuch for the opinion of a man who himself pays not the slightest heed to the opinions and feelings of other people, and I write to you solely because, in this case, I do not wish to appear to have acted or to be acting stealthily. I venture to say, that you know me, and will not ascribe to my present act any other, any evil significance. Speaking to you now, for the last

time, I cannot refrain from wishing you, in memory of our former friendship, all possible earthly blessings.

With sincere respect, I remain, my dear sir,

Your humble servant,

Feódor Kíster.

Feódor Feódorovitch despatched this note to its address, dressed himself, and ordered his calash to be brought round. Cheerful and care-free he strode about his little chamber, humming; he even gave a couple of skips, twisted a copy-book of romances into a tube, and tied it up with blue ribbon. . . . The door opened—and in his coat, devoid of epaulets, with his cap on his head, Lutchkóff entered. The astounded Kíster came to a halt in the middle of the room, without having finished tying the bow.

"You are going to marry the Perekátoff girl?"—asked Avdyéi in a calm voice.

Kíster flared up.

"My dear sir,"—he began:—"on entering a room, decent people take off their caps and say good morning."

"Excuse me, sir," retorted the bully, abruptly, and removed his cap.—"Good morning."

"Good morning, Mr. Lutchkóff. You ask me whether I am going to marry Miss Perekátoff? Have n't you read my letter?"

"I have read your letter. You are going to be married. I congratulate you."

" I accept your congratulations and thank you. But I must go."

" I should like to have an explanation with you, Feódor Feódorovitch."

" Certainly, with pleasure,"—replied the good-natured fellow.—" I must confess that I have been expecting this explanation. Your conduct toward me has been so strange, and I, on my side, I think, have not deserved . . . . at least, I had no reason to expect . . . . But will not you sit down? Will not you have a pipe? "

Lutchkóff sat down. Languor was perceptible in all his movements. He twitched his moustache and elevated his eyebrows.

" Tell me, Feódor Feódorovitch,"—he began at last:—" why did you dissemble so long with me? "

" What do you mean by that? "

" Why did you pretend to be such a . . . such an immaculate creature, when you are just such another man as the rest of us sinners? "

" I do not understand you. . . . Have I offended you in any way? " . . . .

" You do not understand me . . . let us say. I will try to speak more plainly. Tell me, for example, frankly: is it long that you have felt an inclination for Miss Perekátoff, or have you flamed up suddenly with passion? "

" I should prefer not to talk with you, Avdyéi

Iványitch, about my relations to Márya Sergyéevna,"—replied Kíster, coldly.

"Just so, sir. As you please. Only, do me the favour to allow me to think that you have deceived me."

Avdyéi spoke very slowly, and with pauses between his words.

"You cannot think that, Avdyéi Iványitch. You know me. . . ."

"I know you? . . . who knows you? Another man's soul is a dark forest, and wares are judged by their appearance. I know that you read German poems with great feeling, and even with tears in your eyes; I know that you have hung various geographical maps on the walls of your quarters; I know that you keep your person neat; I know this . . . . and I know nothing more."

Kíster began to wax wroth.

"Permit me to inquire,"—he asked at last:—"what is the object of your visit? You have not bowed to me for three weeks, and now you have come to me, apparently with the intention of jeering at me. I am not a small boy, my dear sir, and I will not allow any one . . . ."

"Good gracious,"—Lutchkóff interrupted him:—"good gracious, Feódor Feódorovitch, who would dare to jeer at you? On the contrary, I came to you with a most humble entreaty; namely: do me the favour to explain to me *your* treatment of me. Allow me to ask, was it not

you who forcibly made me acquainted with the Perekátoff family? Was it not you who assured your humble servant that he was blossoming out in soul? Was it not you, in conclusion, who brought me and the virtuous Márya Sergyéevna together? Why should not I assume that I am indebted to *you* for that last agreeable explanation, of which you have, probably, been duly informed? Of course, a betrothed bride tells her bridegroom everything, especially her *innocent* pranks. Why should not I think that it was thanks to you, that I got so magnificently ridiculed? You have taken so much interest in my 'blossoming,' you see."

Kíster paced the room.

"Hearken to me, Lutchkóff,"—he said at last:—"if you really, without jesting, are convinced of what you say,—which, I must confess, I do not believe,—then permit me to say to you: it is a sin and a shame for you to interpret my actions and my intentions so offensively. I will not defend myself . . . . I appeal to your own conscience, to your memory."

"Yes; I remember that you were incessantly whispering with Márya Sergyéevna. Over and above that, permit me to inquire again of you: were not you at the Perekátoffs' after a certain conversation with me? After that evening, when, I, like a fool, blabbed to you, to my best friend, about the rendezvous appointed to me?"

"What! You suspect me of . . . ."

"I suspect no one else of anything,"—Avdyéi interrupted him with deadly coldness,—"of which I do not suspect myself; but I also have the weakness to think that other people are no better than I am."

"You are mistaken,"—retorted Kíster, hotly;—"other people are better than you."

"On which I have the honour to congratulate them," calmly remarked Lutchkóff: "but . . . ."

"But,"—broke in the irritated Kíster in his turn:—"remember, what expressions you used in speaking of . . . . that meeting, of . . . . However, these explanations lead to nothing, I see. . . . Think of me as you see fit, and act as you like."

"There now, that 's better,"—remarked Avdyéi.—"At last we have begun to talk frankly."

"As you like!"—repeated Kíster.

"I understand your position, Feódor Feódorovitch,"—pursued Avdyéi with feigned sympathy.—"It is disagreeable, really disagreeable. A man has played, and played a part, and no one has detected the actor in him; all of a sudden . . . ."

"If I could think,"—Kíster interrupted him, setting his teeth;—"that wounded love was now speaking in you, I might feel compassion for you, I might excuse you. . . . But in your re-

proaches, in your calumnies, merely the shriek of injured vanity is audible . . . . and I feel no pity whatever for you. . . . You have deserved your fate."

"Phew! my God, how the man does talk!"—remarked Avdyéi in an undertone.—"Vanity,"—he went on:—"perhaps so; yes, yes, the vanity in me was deeply, intolerably wounded, as you say. But who is there that is not vain? Not you, surely? Yes, I am vain, and, for example, I will not permit any one to pity me. . . ."

"You will not permit?"—retorted Kíster, haughtily.—"What an expression, my dear sir! Do not forget: the bond between us was broken by you yourself. I beg that you will treat me as you would a stranger."

"Broken! The bond was broken!"—repeated Avdyéi—"understand me: I have not bowed to you, and have not been to see you, out of compassion for you; for you will allow me to pity you, if you pity me! . . . I did not wish to place you in a false position, to awake in you the gnawing of conscience. . . . You speak of our bond . . . . as though you could remain my friend as of yore after your marriage! Enough of that! You only associated with me before for the sake of comforting yourself with your imaginary superiority. . . ."

Avdyéi's bad faith had exhausted, had irritated Kíster.

"Let us put an end to this unpleasant conversation!"—he exclaimed at last.—"I must confess, that I do not understand why it has pleased you to favour me with a call."

"You do not understand why I came to you?"—inquired Avdyéi with curiosity.

"I positively do not understand."

"No—o?"

"No, I tell you. . . ."

"Amazing! . . . This is amazing! Who would have expected this from a man with your brains?"

"Well, then, be so good as to explain, in short. . . ."

"I came, Mr. Kíster,"—said Avdyéi, slowly rising from his seat:—"I came to challenge you to a duel, do you understand? I want to fight with you. Ah! You thought you were going to get rid of me so easily? But did n't you know with what sort of a man you had to deal? Would I permit . . . ."

"Very good, sir,"—Kíster interrupted him coldly and curtly.—"I accept your challenge. Be so good as to send your second to me."

"Yes, yes,"—went on Avdyéi, who, like a cat, was loath to release his victim so speedily;—"I must admit that I shall take great pleasure to-morrow in aiming the muzzle of my pistol at your fair and ideal face."

"You are employing opprobrious language

after the challenge, I believe," retorted Kíster, scornfully.—"Be so good as to leave the room. I am ashamed for you."

"We know all about that *délicatesse!* . . . Ah, Márya Sergyéevna! I don't understand French!"—growled Avdyéi, as he put on his cap.—"Farewell until our pleasant meeting, Feódor Feódorovitch!"

He bowed and withdrew.

Kíster strode up and down the room several times. His face was burning, his breast heaved high. He was not intimidated, and he was not angry; but it disgusted him to think what sort of a man he had once accounted his friend. He almost rejoiced at the thought of the duel with Lutchkóff. . . . To rid himself, at one stroke, of the past, to leap over that stone, and then float along on a tranquil river. . . . "Splendid!" he thought;—"I shall conquer my happiness."

Másha's image seemed to be smiling upon him and promising victory.

"I shall not perish! No, I shall not perish!"—he repeated with a calm, firm smile.

On the table lay the letter to his mother. . . . His heart contracted within him for a moment. He decided, in any case, to delay sending it off. There had taken place in Kíster that augmentation of the vital force, which a man notices in himself in the face of danger. He calmly turned over in his mind all the possible results of the

duel, mentally subjected himself and Másha to the test of unhappiness and separation—and gazed on the future with hope. He gave himself his word of honour that he would not kill Lutchkóff. . . . He felt irresistibly drawn to Másha. He hunted up a second, hastily put his affairs in order, and immediately after dinner went to the Perekátoffs'. All the evening Kíster was merry—too merry, perhaps.

Másha played a great deal on the piano, had no forebodings, and flirted charmingly with him. At first he felt aggrieved at her unconcern, later on he took that same unconcern on Másha's part for a happy augury—and rejoiced and calmed down. She was becoming more and more attached to him every day; the need for happiness was stronger in her than the need for passion. Moreover, Avdyéi had weaned her from all exaggerated desires, and she had renounced them gladly and forever. Neníla Makárievna loved Kíster like a son. Sergyéi Sergyéevitch, as was his habit, imitated his wife.

"Farewell until we meet again,"—said Másha to Kíster, as she escorted him to the anteroom, and with a quiet smile watched how long and tenderly he kissed her hand.

"Until we meet again,"—replied Feódor Feódorovitch with confidence:—"until we meet again."

But, when he had got half a verst from the

Perekátoffs' house, he half-rose in his calash, and with confused disquietude began to seek with his eyes the lighted windows. . . . Everything in the house was already as dark as in the grave.

## XI

On the following day, at eleven o'clock in the morning, Kíster's second, an old, tried Major, came to him. The kind-hearted old man was growling and biting his grey moustache, and wishing every sort of harm to Avdyéi Ivánovitch. . . . The calash was brought round. Kíster handed the Major two letters, one to his mother, the other to Másha.

"What 's this for?"

"Why, one cannot tell . . ."

"What nonsense! We are going to shoot him like a partridge."

"Nevertheless, it is better. . . ."

The Major, with vexation, thrust the two letters into the side pocket of his coat.

They set off. In a small wood, a couple of versts from the village of Kirílovo, Lutchkóff was awaiting them with his second, his former friend, the perfumed regimental Adjutant. The weather was magnificent, the birds were twittering peaceably; not far from the wood a peasant was ploughing the land. While the seconds were measuring off the distance, and fixing the bar-

riers, inspecting and loading the pistols, the antagonists did not even glance at each other. Kíster, with a care-free mien, paced to and fro, twirling a branch which he had broken off; Avdyéi stood motionless, with folded arms and frowning brows. The decisive moment arrived.

"Begin, gentlemen!"

Kíster walked swiftly to the barrier, but before he had taken five steps more, Avdyéi fired. Kíster quivered, advanced another step, reeled, bowed his head. . . . His knees gave way beneath him . . . . he fell on the grass like a sack. The Major rushed to him. . . .

"Is it possible?" . . . . whispered the dying man.

Avdyéi stepped up to the man he had killed. On his gloomy and emaciated visage, fierce, exasperated pity was expressed. . . . He glanced at the Adjutant and the Major, bent his head like a culprit, silently mounted his horse, and rode at a foot-pace straight to the quarters of the Colonel.

Másha . . . . is alive at the present day.

# PYETUSHKÓFF

(1847)

# PYETUSHKÓFF

## I

IN the year 182.., in the town of O***, dwelt Lieutenant Iván Afanásievitch Pyetushkóff. He was descended from poor parents, had been left a full orphan at the age of five years, and had fallen into the hands of a guardian. Thanks to his guardian, he turned out to have no property whatsoever; he got along as best he might. He was of medium height and stooped somewhat; he had a thin face covered with freckles, but quite pleasant, notwithstanding; dark chestnut hair, grey eyes, and a timid look; numerous wrinkles covered his low forehead. The whole of Pyetushkóff's life had passed in an extremely monotonous manner; at the age of forty he was still as young and inexperienced as a child. He shunned his acquaintances, and treated those on whose destiny he might have an influence very gently. . . .

People who are condemned by Fate to a monotonous and cheerless life often acquire divers habits and requirements. Pyetushkóff was fond of eating a fresh, white roll of a morning with his tea. Without that dainty he could not exist.

And behold, one morning, his servant, Onísim, instead of the roll, presented to him on a plate three dark-reddish rusks.[1] Pyetushkóff immediately, with some indignation, asked his servant what was the meaning of that.

"The rolls were all gone,"—answered Onísim, a native-born Petersburgian, who by the strange play of Fate, had been carried to the very wilds of southern Russia.

"Impossible!"—exclaimed Iván Afanásievitch.

"They were all gone,"—repeated Onísim;—"the Marshal of the Nobility has a breakfast today, so they all went there, you know."

Onísim swept his hand through the air and thrust forward his right leg.

Iván Afanásievitch walked through the room, dressed himself and set out in person for the baker's shop. The only establishment of that sort in O*** had been set up ten years previously by a newcomer, a German, had speedily thriven, and was still flourishing at the present time, under the management of his widow, a corpulent woman.

Pyetushkóff knocked on the window. The fat woman thrust her unhealthily-puffy and sleepy face through the hinged pane.

"Please give me a white roll,"—said Pyetushkóff, pleasantly.

[1] Zwieback.—Translator.

"We are out of rolls,"—squeaked the fat woman.

"You have no rolls?"

"No."

"How is this?—good gracious. I buy a roll from you every day and pay promptly."

The woman stared at him in silence.—"Take a cracknel,"—she said at last, with a yawn,—"or a *papliúkha.*" [1]

"I won't,"—said Pyetushkóff.

"As you like,"—mumbled the woman, and slammed to the pane.

Violent irritation seized upon Iván Afanásievitch. He retreated in perplexity to the other side of the street, and gave himself up wholly, like a child, to his displeasure.

"Sir!" . . . a fairly agreeable feminine voice rang out.—"Sir!"

Iván Afanásievitch raised his eyes. A young girl of seventeen was peering forth through the pane, and holding in her hand a white roll. She had a round, plump face, small brown eyes, a somewhat snub nose, reddish-blond hair, and magnificent shoulders. Her features were expressive of good-nature, indolence and unconcern.

"Here is a roll for you, sir,"—she said, laughing;—"I was going to take it for myself, but if you wish, I will give it up to you."

[1] A flat cake.—Translator.

"I thank you most sincerely. Permit me, ma'am. . . ."

Pyetushkóff began to fumble in his pocket.

"Never mind; it is n't necessary, sir. Eat, and may health be yours."

She closed the pane.

Pyetushkóff returned home in a thoroughly agreeable frame of mind.

"See there now, thou didst not get a roll,"—he said to his Onísim,—"but here, I have got one; seest thou? . . . ."

Onísim grinned sourly.

That same day, in the evening, Iván Afanásievitch, as he was undressing, asked his servant:

"Tell me, my good fellow, please, what girl is that yonder at the baker's, hey?"

Onísim glanced aside in a rather gloomy way, and answered:—"But why do you want to know?"

"Because,"—said Pyetushkóff, taking off his boots with his own hands.

"She 's pretty, certainly!"—remarked Onísim, condescendingly.

"Yes . . . she is n't bad-looking . . . ." said Iván Afanásievitch, also glancing aside. "And what is her name—dost thou know?"

"Vasilísa."

"And art thou acquainted with her?"

Onísim made no answer for a while.

"I am, sir."

Pyetushkóff was on the point of opening his mouth, but turned over on his other side and went to sleep. Onísim withdrew into the anteroom, took a pinch of snuff, and twisted his head round.

The next day, early in the morning, Pyetushkóff ordered his things for dressing to be given him. Onísim brought Iván Afanásievitch's everyday coat—an old coat of grass-green hue,[1] with huge, faded epaulets. Pyetushkóff stared long and silently at Onísim, then ordered him to get his new coat. Onísim obeyed, not without surprise. Pyetushkóff dressed himself, and carefully drew on his hands wash-leather gloves.

"Thou needest not go to the baker's shop today, my good fellow,"—said he. "I will go myself . . . . it is on my way."

"I obey, sir,"—replied Onísim, as abruptly as though some one had punched him in the back.

Pyetushkóff set forth, reached the baker's shop, and knocked at the little window. The fat woman opened the pane.

"A roll, if you please,"—said Iván Afanásievitch, slowly.

The fat woman stuck out her arm, bare to the very shoulder, and resembling a haunch rather than an arm, and thrust the hot bread straight under his nose.

[1] The coats of officers in the majority of infantry regiments are dark green. Dandified officers try to get the shade as dark as possible.—Translator.

Iván Afanásievitch stood still for a while in front of the little window, paced up and down the street a couple of times, cast a glance into the courtyard, and, ashamed, at last, of his childishness, returned home with the roll in his hand. All day long he felt awkward, and even in the evening, contrary to his wont, he did not enter into conversation with Onísim.

On the following morning, also, Onísim went again for the roll.

## II

Several weeks passed. Iván Afanásievitch had totally forgotten Vasilísa, and chatted in friendly wise with his servant as of yore. One fine morning, Mr. Bublítzyn dropped in to see him, —an easy-mannered and very amiable young man. Truth to tell, he sometimes did not know what he was saying, and was, as the saying is, all awry, but, nevertheless, bore the reputation of being a very agreeable companion. He smoked a great deal, with feverish eagerness, elevating his brows, drawing in his chest—smoked with a careworn expression, or, to speak more accurately, with an aspect which seemed to say, "Let me take just one more, last whiff, and I will immediately tell you an unexpected bit of news"; he even bellowed, sometimes, and waved his hand, hastily sucking at his pipe, as though

he had suddenly remembered something extremely amusing or important, opened his mouth, emitted rings of smoke, and uttered the most commonplace remarks, and sometimes maintained utter silence.

After chatting awhile with Iván Afanásievitch about the neighbours, about horses, about the young daughters of the landed proprietors, and other edifying subjects, Mr. Bublítzyn suddenly puckered up his eyes, rumpled up his crest, and, with a sly smile, stepped up to a remarkably dim mirror, the only adornment of Iván Afanásievitch's room.

"Well, now, to tell the truth,"—he enunciated, stroking his dark-brown side-whiskers,—"we have here such women of the burgher class as would put to shame your Venus of Mendintzi. . . . For example, have you seen Vasilísa the baker's girl?" . . . . Mr. Bublítzyn stretched himself.

Pyetushkóff started.

"But why do I ask you?"—pursued Bublítzyn, disappearing in a cloud of smoke,—"you 're such a queer man, Iván Afanásievitch!—God knows what you do take an interest in, Iván Afanásievitch!"

"In the same things as you do,"—said Pyetushkóff, not without irritation, and in a drawl.

"Well, no, Iván Afanásievitch, no. . . . Why do you say that?"

"But what do you mean?"

"Well, the very idea, Iván Afanásievitch!"

"But why? Why?"

Bublítzyn set his pipe in one corner, and began to inspect his not entirely handsome boots. Pyetushkóff felt embarrassed.

"Because, Iván Afanásievitch, because,"—went on Bublítzyn, as though sparing him.—"But as for Vasilísa, the baker's girl, I must inform you that she 's very, ve-ry pretty . . . . ve-ry."

Strange to relate! Iván Afanásievitch felt something akin to jealousy. He began to fidget about on his chair, he burst out laughing apropos of nothing, he suddenly blushed, yawned, and as he yawned, twisted his lower jaw somewhat. Bublítzyn smoked three pipes more and departed. Iván Afanásievitch walked to the window, sighed, and ordered his man to give him a drink.

Onísim placed a glass of kvas[1] on the table, cast a surly glance at his master, leaned his back against the door, and hung his head.

"What art thou thinking about?"—inquired his master, affectionately, and not without trepidation.

"What am I thinking about?"—retorted Onísim;—"what am I thinking about? . . . . Always about you."

[1] A sourish small beer made from sour black, rye bread, or rye meal, by pouring on water and fermenting.—TRANSLATOR.

"About me?"

"About you, of course."

"But what is it that thou art thinking?"

"Why, this is what I am thinking." (Here Onísim took a pinch of snuff.) "Shame on you, sir, shame on you."

"What have I to be ashamed of?" . . . .

"What have you to be ashamed of? . . . . Why, just look at Mr. Bublítzyn, Iván Afanásievitch. . . . Is n't he a dashing fine fellow, pray?"

"I don't understand thee, my good fellow."

"You don't understand? . . . . Yes, you do understand me."

Onísim paused.

"Mr. Bublítzyn is a real gentleman, as a gentleman should be. But what are you, Iván Afanásievitch, what are you, pray?"

"Well, I am a gentleman also."

"A gentleman, a gentleman . . ." retorted Onísim, flying into a passion.—"Do you call yourself a gentleman? You 're simply a wet hen, Iván Afanásievitch, good gracious! Here you sit by yourself the livelong day . . . much you will hatch out! You don't play cards, you don't associate with the gentry, and as for . . . ."

Onísim waved his hand with a gesture of despair.

"Well, anyhow . . . . I think thou art too

. . . ." said Iván Afanásievitch, clutching at his Turkish pipe in confusion.

" Too what, Iván Afanásievitch, too what? Judge for yourself. Here now, about that Vasilísa again. . . . Well, and why should n't you. . . ."

" But what art thou thinking about, Onísim? " —Pyetushkóff interrupted him sadly.

" I know what I 'm thinking. What then? God bless us! But how can you? Good gracious, Iván Afanásievitch, you sit by yourself... Certainly you. . . ."

Iván Afanásievitch rose to his feet.

" Come, come, please hold thy tongue,"—he said briskly, and as though challenging Onísim with his eyes.—" I also, thou knowest . . . I . . . . what dost thou mean, in fact? Thou hadst better help me to dress."

Onísim slowly pulled off Iván Afanásievitch's greasy Tatár dressing-gown, with paternal sadness gazed at his master, shook his head, got him into his tight-fitting coat, and set to beating him on the back with a dust-brush.

Pyetushkóff left the house, and after wandering for a short time through the crooked streets of the town, found himself in front of the baker's shop. A strange smile played on his lips.

Before he had time to cast a second glance at the too-familiar establishment, the wicket-gate

suddenly flew open, and Vasilísa ran out, with a yellow kerchief on her head, and a short, wadded jacket thrown over her shoulders, after the Russian fashion.[1]

"Whither dost thou deign to go, my dear?"[2]

Vasilísa cast a quick glance at him, burst out laughing, turned away, and covered her lips with her hand.

"To make purchases, I suppose?"—inquired Iván Afanásievitch, shifting from foot to foot.

"How curious you are,"—retorted Vasilísa.

"Why do you call me curious?"—said Pyetushkóff, hastily brandishing his arms.—"Quite the contrary, I . . . . I just—you know,"—he added hurriedly, as though those four words thoroughly explained his meaning.

"And did you enjoy my roll?"

"I certainly did, ma'am,"—replied Pyetushkóff:—"it gave me particular satisfaction."

Vasilísa continued to walk along and laugh.

"The weather is pleasant to-day,"—pursued Iván Afanásievitch:—"do you often go for a stroll?"

"I take a stroll sometimes, sir."

"Akh, how I wish that I . . . ."

"What, sir?"

The young girls with us pronounce the words "what, sir?" in a very strange, rather peculiarly

[1] The jacket is called, literally, a "soul warmer." "Russian fashion" means with the sleeves hanging unused.—Translator.

[2] Literally, "dear little dove."—Translator.

sharp and quick manner. . . . Partridges call thus at dawn.

"Could I walk with you, ma'am, you know, ma'am . . . . outside the town, perhaps. . . ."

"How is that possible?"

"Why is n't it possible?"

"Akh, how you do go on, really!"

"But permit me. . . ."

At this point there came hopping alongside of them a petty merchant with a goat's beard and fingers spread out in the shape of hooks to keep his sleeves from falling down, clad in a long-skirted bluish kaftan, and a warm wadded cap with a visor, which resembled a swollen watermelon. Pyetushkóff, out of decorum, dropped a little behind Vasilísa, but immediately caught up with her again.

"Well, and how is to be about the stroll, ma'am?"

Vasilísa cast a roguish glance at him, and again began to smile.

"Do you belong here in town?"

"I do, ma'am."

Vasilísa passed her hand over her hair, and walked more slowly. Iván Afanásievitch smiled, and inwardly fainting with terror, bent a little to one side, and with a tremulous arm, encircled the beauty's waist.

Vasilísa shrieked.

"Stop that, you impudent thing, on the street."

"Come, come, come, 't is nothing,"—muttered Iván Afanásievitch.

"Stop it, I tell you, in the street. . . . Don't insult me."

"A.... a.... akh, what a spit-fire you are," —said Pyetushkóff, reproachfully, and blushed to his very ears.

Vasilísa halted.

"Go your way, sir, go. . . ."

Pyetushkóff obeyed. He went home, sat for a whole hour motionless on a chair, and did not even smoke his pipe. At last he got a sheet of greyish paper, mended his pen, and after long reflection, he wrote the following letter:

Dear Madam,

Vasilísa Timofyéevna:

Not being by nature an offensive man, how could I cause you unpleasantness. But if I really am culpable toward you, then, namely, I say to you, the hints of Mr. Bublítzyn prompted me to that which I had not in the least expected.

However, I respectfully request you not to be angry with me. I am a susceptible man, and I am sensitive to every caress and am grateful. Be not angry with me, Vasilísa Timofyéevna, I entreat you most humbly. However with my respects, I remain,

Your humble servant,

Iván Pyetushkóff.

Onísim carried this letter to its address.

## III

Two weeks passed. . . . Onísim went to the baker's shop every morning, according to his custom. And lo! one day, Vasilísa ran out to meet him.

"Good morning, Onísim Sergyéevitch."

Onísim assumed a surly aspect and said angrily:—"Morning."

"Why don't you ever drop in to see us, Onísim Sergyéevitch?"

Onísim glared morosely at her.

"Why should I drop in? Thou wilt not treat me to tea, I suppose?"

"I will, Onísim, I will give you tea. Only come. And with rum."

Onísim gave a slow smile.

"Well, as thou wilt, in that case."

"But when, my dear man, when?"

"When. . . . Ekh, thou . . . ."

"This evening, does that suit you? Do drop in."

"I will, if you like,"—returned Onísim, and trudged off homeward with a lazy and swaggering gait.

That same day, in the evening, in a tiny chamber, by the side of a bed covered with a striped down quilt, at a clumsy table, sat Onísim opposite Vasilísa. A huge dimly-yellow samovár

stood hissing on the table; a pot of geranium reared itself in front of the small window; in one corner, near the door, stood sideways a hideous trunk, with a tiny padlock; on the trunk lay a porous heap of various old odds and ends; on the walls dirty little pictures made black spots. Onísim and Vasilísa were drinking tea in silence, as they gazed into each other's face, turned their lumps of sugar long in their hands, as though reluctant to nibble them,[1] half-closed their eyes, blinked, and drew the yellowish boiling water through their teeth with a whistling noise. At last they drank the samovár dry, turned upside down [2] their round teacups with inscriptions,—on one: "To Gratification," and on the other: "It innocently Pierced,"—grunted with satisfaction, mopped away the perspiration, and began gradually to enter into conversation.

"What 's your master like, Onísim Sergyéitch?" . . . inquired Vasilísa, and did not finish her sentence.

"What 's my master like?" . . . returned Onísim and propped his head on his hand. "'T is

[1] Poor Russians, especially of the peasant and petty burgher class, nibble their sugar, and so economically sweeten their mouths instead of the beverage. But Russians of all classes are fond of this method, without regard to economy.—Translator.

[2] To indicate that they had finished. Russian lower-class etiquette, enjoins that the cup be thus reversed as a sign that the invitation to "have another cup" is definitively declined, and that further polite urging (also a point of etiquette), is useless.—Translator.

well known what he is like. But what do you want to know for?"

"I just asked, sir, at random," replied Vasilísa.

"Why, you know, he . . ." (here Onísim grinned):—"you know, he wrote a letter to you, I believe."

"He did, sir."

Onísim wagged his head with an uncommonly self-satisfied air.

"There now, there now,"—he said hoarsely, and not without a smile.—"Well, and what did he write to you?"

"Why, various things. 'I, Madam Vasilísa Timofyéevna,' says he, 'am thus and so; did n't mean anything; you are not to think; you are not to feel offended, madam'; and lots more of the same sort he wrote. . . . Well,"—she added, after a brief pause—"and what sort of a man is he?"

"He exists,"—replied Onísim, indifferently.

"Has he a bad temper?"

"The idea! No, he has n't. Well, and do you like him?"

Vasilísa dropped her eyes and laughed in her sleeve.

"Come,"—growled Onísim.

"But what do you want to know for, Onísim Sergyéitch?"

"Come, now, speak, I tell you."

"What 's your master like?"—repeated Vasi-

lísa, at last. "Of course . . . . I . . . well, and he 's so . . . . you know how it is yourself. . . ."

"How can I help knowing?"—remarked Onísim, pompously.

"For of course you are aware, Onísim Sergyéitch . . . ."

Vasilísa was obviously becoming agitated.

"Do you say to him, to your master that is: 'I am not angry with him,' says she, 'and here,' says she . . . ."

She began to stammer. . .

"We understand, ma'am,"—returned Onísim, and slowly rose from his chair.—"We understand, ma'am. Thanks for your hospitality."

"I hope you will favour me again with your company."

"Well, all right, all right."

Onísim walked to the door. The fat woman made her appearance in the room.

"How do you do, Onísim Sergyéitch?"—she said in a sing-song tone.

"How do you do, Praskóvya Ivánovna?"—he replied, also in a sing-song tone.

Both stood still awhile facing each other.

"Well, good-bye, Praskóvya Ivánovna,"—said Onísim with his drawl.

"Well, good-bye, Onísim Sergyéitch,"—she replied, also drawling.

Onísim returned home. His master was lying on his bed, and staring at the ceiling.

"Where hast thou been?"

"Where have I been?" . . . (Onísim had a habit of reproachfully repeating the last words of every question.)—"I have been about your business."

"What business?"

"And don't you know? . . . I have been to Vasilísa's."

Pyetushkóff winked his eyes, and wriggled on the bed.

"That 's exactly how it is,"—remarked Onísim, and coolly took a pinch of snuff:—"that 's exactly how it is, always like that. Vasilísa sends her compliments to you."

"You don't say so?"

"You don't say so? That 's exactly how it is. You don't say so! . . . . She bade me say, 'Why don't I see him?' says she. 'Why does n't he come?' says she."

"Well, and what didst thou say?"

"What did I say? I said to her: 'Thou art silly,'—I said to her;—'will such folks come to see thee? No, do thou come thyself,'—I said to her."

"Well, and what did she say?"

"What did she say? . . . . She . . . . nothing."

"But what dost thou mean by nothing?"

"Everybody knows what nothing means."

Pyetushkóff maintained silence for a space.

"Well, and will she come?"

Onísim wagged his head.

"Come! . . . . You 're in an awful hurry, sir. Come! . . . . No, but just you . . . ."

"Why, but thou saidst thyself that . . . . you know . . . ."

"Much I did!"

Again Pyetushkóff remained silent awhile.

"Well, but what is the state of affairs, my good fellow?"

"What is the state of affairs? . . . . You ought to know best: you 're the master."

"Well, no, what is there . . . ."

Onísim rocked himself to and fro in self-satisfied fashion.

"Do you know Praskóvya Ivánovna?"—he asked at last.

"No. What Praskóvya Ivánovna?"

"The bake-shop woman?"

"Ah, yes, the bake-shop woman. I have seen her: a very fat woman."

"A woman of importance. She 's your own aunt by blood, you know."

"My aunt?"

"Why, did n't you know that?"

"No, I did not."

"Ekh! . . . ."

Out of respect to his master, Onísim did not utter the whole of his thought.

"There 's a person with whom you should get acquainted."

"All right. I have no objection."

Onísim gazed approvingly at Iván Afanásievitch.

"But why, in particular, ought I to make her acquaintance?"—inquired Pyetushkóff.

"Just see there, now!"—returned Onísim, coolly.

Iván Afanásievitch rose, paced the room, halted in front of the window, and, without turning his head, enunciated with some confusion:

"Onísim!"

"What, sir?"

"And won't I feel rather awkward, thou knowest, with a woman, hey?"

"You know best."

"However, I only asked the question at random. My comrades may notice; it 's always rather . . . . However, I will think the matter over. Give me my pipe. . . And so she,"—he added after a brief pause:—"Vasilísa, I mean, says . . . ."

But Onísim did not wish to prolong the conversation and assumed his habitual glum aspect.

## IV

Iván Afanásievitch's acquaintance with Praskóvya Ivánovna began in the following manner. Five days after the conversation with Onísim, Pyetushkóff set out one evening for the baker's shop.—"Come," he said to himself, as he opened

the creaking wicket-gate,—"I don't know what will happen. . . ."

He mounted the porch, and opened the door. A very large, crested hen darted straight under his feet, with a deafening shriek, and for a long time thereafter continued to scurry agitatedly about the yard. The surprised face of the fat woman gazed from the window of the adjoining room. Iván Afanásievitch smiled and nodded his head. The woman saluted him. Clutching his hat tightly, Iván Afanásievitch approached her. Praskóvya Ivánovna was, evidently, expecting an honoured guest; all the hooks of her gown were fastened. Pyetushkóff seated himself on a chair; Praskóvya Ivánovna seated herself opposite him.

"I have come to you, Praskóvya Ivánovna, chiefly with regard to . . . ." said Iván Afanásievitch at last—and fell silent. His lips twitched convulsively.

"I am glad to see you, dear little father,"—replied Praskóvya Ivánovna in a sing-song tone, and bowing. "I am glad to see any visitor."

Pyetushkóff summoned up a little courage.

"I have long wished, you know, to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance, Praskóvya Ivánovna."

"Much obliged, Iván Afanásievitch."

A pause ensued. Praskóvya Ivánovna mopped her face with a gay-coloured hand-

kerchief; Iván Afanásievitch stared somewhere to one side with great attention. Both were decidedly embarrassed. However, in merchant and petty burgher circles, where even old friends do not meet without queer angular grimaces, a certain constraint in the manners of guest and host not only does not strike any one as strange, but, on the contrary, is regarded as perfectly fitting and indispensable, especially at a first interview. Praskóvya Ivánovna was pleased with Pyetushkóff. He bore himself decorously and properly, and nevertheless he was a man with official rank!

"I am very fond of your rolls, dear little mother, Praskóvya Ivánovna,"—he said to her.

"Jist so, sir, jist so, sir."

"They are very good, you know, very."

"Eat, dear little father, and may health be yours, eat. It gives me great pleasure."

"Even in Moscow I never ate such good ones."

"Jist so, sir, jist so, sir."

Again silence descended.

"But tell me, Praskóvya Ivánovna,"—began Iván Afanásievitch:—"I believe you have a niece living with you?"

"My own niece, dear little father."

"Well, . . . how comes she to be with you?"

"She is an orphan, and I support her, sir."

"And she is a good worker?"

"She is, dear little father, she is. Such a good

worker that ih . . . . ih . . . . ih! . . . Certainly, sir, certainly, sir!"

Iván Afanásievitch considered it decorous not to enlarge further on the subject of the niece.

"What sort of a bird have you in that cage, Praskóvya Ivánovna?"

"Why, God only knows. 'T is a bird."

"Hm! Well, good-bye, Praskóvya Ivánovna."

"Good-bye, your Well-Born. I hope you will favour us again. Come and drink tea."

"It will give me particular pleasure, Praskóvya Ivánovna."

Pyetushkóff withdrew. On the porch he encountered Vasilísa. She burst out laughing.

"Whither are you going, my dear little dove?" —said Iván Afanásievitch, not without audacity.

"Come, stop that, stop that, you jester; what a tease you are!"

"He, he! And did you get my note?"

Vasilísa hid the lower part of her face in her sleeve and made no reply.

"And you are not angry with me?"

"Vasilísa!"—quavered her aunt's voice:—"hey, there, Vasilísa!"

Vasilísa ran into the house. Pyetushkóff went his way. But from that day forth he began to visit the baker's shop frequently, and not in vain. Iván Afanásievitch, to speak in lofty style, attained his end. The attainment of an end usu-

ally cools men off, but Pyetushkóff, on the contrary, grew more and more ardent with every passing day. Love is a fortuitous affair; it exists of itself, as an art, and needs no justification, like nature, some wise man has said, who himself had never been in love, but reasoned admirably about love. Pyetushkóff became passionately attached to Vasilísa. He was perfectly happy. His soul warmed up. Little by little he transferred all his belongings, at least all his Turkish pipes, to Praskóvya Ivánovna's house, and sat for whole days together in her back room. Praskóvya charged him for his dinner, and drank his tea; consequently, she did not complain of his presence. Vasilísa got used to him, worked, sang, and spun in his presence, and sometimes exchanged a couple of words with him; Pyetushkóff gazed at her, smoked his pipe, rocked himself on his chair, laughed, and, during her leisure hours, played *duratchki* [fool] with her and Praskóvya Ivánovna. Iván Afanásievitch was happy. . . . . But there is nothing perfect on earth, and however small a man's demands may be, Fate never fully satisfies them, even spoils things, if possible. . . . The spoonful of tar will persist in falling into the barrel of honey![1] Iván Afanásievitch made experience of this in his own case. In the first place, ever since his

[1] The Russian expression to indicate that one drop of bitterness will ruin the sweetest of fates.—TRANSLATOR.

removal to Vasilísa's, Pyetushkóff had fallen still more out of touch with his comrades. He saw them only on indispensable occasions, and then, with a view to avoiding hints and jeers (in which, by the way, he was not always successful), he assumed the desperately-morose and concentratedly-alarmed mien of a hare which is drumming in the midst of fireworks. In the second place, Onísim gave him no peace, lost all reverence for him, obdurately persecuted him, and put him to shame. In the third place, and in conclusion . . . . Alas! read further, indulgent reader.

## V

One day Pyetushkóff (who, for the above-mentioned reasons, fared badly outside of Praskóvya Ivánovna's house) was sitting in the rear room—Vasilísa's room—and busying himself with some sort of domestic preparation, not precisely a preserve, nor yet precisely a liqueur. The mistress of the house was not at home. Vasilísa was sitting in the bake-shop and humming a song.

A tap came on the pane. Vasilísa rose, stepped to the window, uttered a faint shriek, burst out laughing, and began a whispered conversation with some person or other. On returning to her seat, she sighed, and began to sing louder than before.

"With whom wert thou chatting just now?" —Pyetushkóff asked her.

Vasilísa continued to "break the viburnum-bush." [1]

"Vasilísa! Dost hear? Hey, Vasilísa?"

"What do you want?"

"With whom wert thou talking?"

"And why do you want to know?"

"Because I do."

Pyetushkóff emerged from the back room in a motley-hued Caucasian coat, with sleeves rolled up and with a siphon in his hand.

"Why, with a good friend,"—replied Vasilísa.

"With what good friend?"

"Why, with Piótr Petróvitch."

"With Piótr Petróvitch? . . . . With what Piótr Petróvitch?"

"He 's a comrade of yours also. He has such a queer name."

"Bublítzyn?" [2]

[1] The viburnum, or wild snowball-tree, figures in many of the folk-songs. "Breaking the viburnum-bush" is one of the traditional rites connected with the peasant wedding. On the young couple's table there is a ham and a square bottle of liquor corked with a bunch of viburnum tied with a scarlet ribbon. The bridal pair are aroused, and treating begins: they make the round of the homes of the bride's relatives, parents and the members of her bridal-train (consisting of certain definitely-prescribed persons for bridegroom and bride), and the wedding-guests. On their return, the best man (the eleventh in the groom's train) cuts the ham, and pulling apart the cluster of viburnum, passes around the liquor. Every step of the traditional wedding-ceremonial is accompanied by songs. Vasilísa was singing the one appointed for the final stage, as above described.—Translator.

[2] Derived from *búblik*—a large roll in the form of a ring.—Translator.

"Well, yes, yes. . . . Piótr Petróvitch."

"And dost thou know him?"

"I should think I did!"—returned Vasilísa, nodding her head.

Pyetushkóff paced up and down the room half a score of times, in silence.

"Hearken to me, Vasilísa,"—he said at last:—"in what way dost thou know him?"

"In what way do I know him? . . . . Why, I do know him. . . . He 's such a nice gentleman."

"But how is he nice? How is he nice? How is he nice?"

Vasilísa looked at Iván Afanásievitch.

"He is,"—she said slowly and with surprise.—"Everybody knows what he is."

Pyetushkóff bit his lips and began to pace the room again.

"What wert thou talking about with him? Hey?"

Vasilísa smiled and dropped her eyes.

"Come, speak, speak, speak, I tell thee, speak!"

"What a temper you are in to-day,"—remarked Vasilísa.

Pyetushkóff made no answer.

"Well, no, Vasilísa,"—he began at last:—"no, I will not be angry. . . . Come now, tell me, what were you talking about?"

Vasilísa laughed.

"That Piótr Petróvitch is such a joker, really!"

"How so?"

"Well, he is!"

Again Pyetushkóff made no reply.

"Vasilísa, thou lovest me, I think?"—he asked her.

"Come, take yourself off!"

Poor Pyetushkóff's head grew oppressed. Praskóvya Ivánovna entered. They sat down to dine. After dinner, Praskóvya Ivánovna took herself off to the platform over the oven.[1] Iván Afanásievitch himself lay down by the oven, nestled about for a while, and fell asleep. A cautious creaking noise awoke him. Iván Afanásievitch half raised himself, propped himself on his elbow, and looked: the door was open. He sprang up—Vasilísa was gone. He ran into the yard—and she was not in the yard; into the street—and gazed hither and thither: Vasilísa was not to be seen. Hatless, he ran clear to the market: no Vasilísa was visible. Slowly he returned to the baker's shop, climbed up on the oven, and turned his face to the wall. He was heavy at heart. Bublítzyn . . . . Bublítzyn . . . . that name fairly rang in his ears.

"What 's the matter with thee, dear little father?"—Praskóvya Ivánovna asked him with a sleepy voice.—"Why art thou groaning?"

"Nothing, dear little mother; 't was just by accident. Nothing. I feel choked, somehow."

[1] For sleeping.—Translator.

"'T is the mushrooms,"—lisped Praskóvya Ivánovna,—"'t is all the mushrooms."

O Lord, have mercy upon us sinners!

One hour passed, then another—and still Vasilísa was absent. A score of times did Pyetushkóff feel impelled to rise, and a score of times did he sadly nestle down under the sheepskin coat. . . . At last, however, he climbed down from the oven and started to go home, and had already got out into the yard, but turned back. Praskóvya Ivánovna had risen. Luká, the workman, as black as a beetle, although he was a baker, was putting the loaves in the oven. Again Pyetushkóff went out on the porch and pondered. A goat who dwelt in the courtyard made up to him, and butted him slightly with his horns, in friendly wise. Pyetushkóff glanced at him, and, God knows why, said: "Kys, kys!" [1] All of a sudden, the low-browed wicket-gate opened softly, and Vasilísa made her appearance. Iván Afanásievitch went straight to meet her, took her by the hand, and said to her with considerable coolness, but quite firmly:

"Follow me."

"But excuse me, Iván Afanásievitch . . . . I . . . ."

"Follow me,"—he repeated.

She obeyed.

Pyetushkóff led her to his own lodgings.

[1] Equivalent to: "Puss, puss!"—TRANSLATOR.

Onísim, according to his habit, was sleeping, stretched out at full length. Iván Afanásievitch woke him, and ordered him to light a candle. Vasilísa walked to the window and seated herself in silence. While Onísim was fussing with the light in the anteroom, Pyetushkóff stood motionless at the other window, staring into the street. Onísim entered, with the candle in his hand, and started to grumble. . . . Iván Afanásievitch wheeled swiftly round.

"Leave the room,"—he said to him.

Onísim stopped short in the middle of the room. . . .

"Leave the room this very instant!"—repeated Pyetushkóff, sternly.

Onísim cast a glance at his master, and left the room.

Iván Afanásievitch shouted after him:

"Begone, go away altogether! Leave the house. Thou mayest return two hours hence."

Onísim took himself off.

Pyetushkóff waited until the gate slammed, and immediately approached Vasilísa.

"Where hast thou been?"

Vasilísa was disconcerted.

"Where hast thou been? I ask thee,"—he repeated.

Vasilísa cast a glance around her. . . .

"I am speaking to thee. . . . Where hast thou been?"

Pyetushkóff began to raise his hand. . . .

"Don't beat me, Iván Afanásievitch, don't beat me . . . ." whispered Vasilísa in affright.

Pyetushkóff turned away.

"Beat thee. . . . No! I will not beat thee. Beat thee? Forgive me, forgive me, my darling. God bless thee! When I thought that thou didst love me, when I . . . . when . . . ."

Iván Afanásievitch stopped. He was choking.

"Listen, Vasilísa,"—he said at last: "I am a good-natured man, as thou knowest; thou dost know that, Vasilísa, dost thou not?"

"I do,"—she stammered out.

"I do harm to no one, to no one, to no one in the world. And I deceive no one. Then why dost thou deceive me?"

"But I do not deceive thee, Iván Afanásievitch."

"Thou dost not deceive me? Well, good. Well, good. Come, tell me, where hast thou been?"

"I went to Matryóna."

"Thou liest!"

"God is my witness, I went to see Matryóna. Ask her if you do not believe me."

"And Bub . . . . come, what 's his name? . . . . didst thou see that devil?"

"I did."

"Thou sawest him? Thou sawest him?—Ah! thou sawest him?"

Pyetushkóff turned pale.

"So thou didst make an appointment with him this morning, at the window . . . . hey? hey?"

"He asked me to come."

"And thou didst go. . . . Thanks, dear little mother, thanks, my own!"—Pyetushkóff made a bow to Vasilísa's girdle.

"Yes, Iván Afanásievitch, perhaps you think . . . ."

"Thou wouldst do well not to talk! And I, the fool, have made a pretty mess of it too! What am I shouting about? As for thee, pray consort with whomsoever thou wilt. I care nothing for thee. So there now! I 'll have nothing to do with thee."

Vasilísa rose to her feet.

"As you like, Iván Afanásievitch."

"Whither art thou going?"

"Why, you yourself, you know . . . ."

"I 'm not driving thee away,"—Pyetushkóff interrupted her.

"No, really now, Iván Afanásievitch. . . . Why should I remain at your house? . . ."

Pyetushkóff let her get as far as the door.

"So thou art going away, Vasilísa?"

"You keep insulting me. . . ."

"I insult thee! Thou dost not fear God, Vasilísa! When did I ever insult thee? Come, no, no, tell me, when?"

"But what do you mean? A little while ago you came near thrashing me."

"Vasilísa, 't is sinful of thee. Really, 't is sinful!"

"And you have reproached me, to boot, and said: 'I won't have anything to do with thee. I 'm a gentleman,' you said."

Iván Afanásievitch began silently to wring his hands. Vasilísa got to the middle of the room.

"Well, what then? God be with you, Iván Afanásievitch. I will go my way, and you can go yours. . . ."

"Enough, Vasilísa, enough of that,"—Pyetushkóff interrupted her.—"Thou hadst better change thy mind; look at me. Surely, I am not like myself. I don't know myself, what I am saying. . . . Thou mightest have pity on me. ."

"You are always insulting me, Iván Afanásievitch. . . ."

"Ekh, Vasilísa! When sorrow is asleep, wake it not. Is n't that so? Thou art not angry with me, art thou?"

"You are always insulting me,"—repeated Vasilísa.

"I won't do it again, I won't do it again. Forgive me, an old man. I 'll never do so again. Come, hast thou forgiven me, I 'd like to know?"

"God be with thee, Iván Afanásievitch."

"Come, laugh, laugh. . . ."

Vasilísa turned away.

"She laughed, the dear soul, she laughed!" —cried Pyetushkóff, dancing up and down where he stood, like a child. . . .

## VI

On the following day, Pyetushkóff, according to his wont, set off for the baker's shop. Everything went on as of yore. But a thorn had been implanted in his heart. He no longer laughed as frequently, and he was sometimes pensive. Sunday arrived. Praskóvya Ivánovna had a pain in her loins; she stuck to the platform over the oven; with a great effort, she got down to go to the morning service. After the service, Pyetushkóff called Vasilísa into the rear room. She had been complaining all the morning of being bored. Judging by the expression of Iván Afanásievitch's face, an unusual thought, and one which was unexpected to himself, was running about in his mind.

"Come, sit thee down here, Vasilísa,"—he said to her,—"and I will sit there. I must have a little talk with thee."

Vasilísa seated herself.

"Tell me, Vasilísa, dost thou know how to write?"

"To write?"

"Yes, to write."

"No, I don't know how."

"And to read?"

"And I don't know how to read either."

"But who read my letter to thee?"

"The chanter."

Pyetushkóff was silent for a while.

"But wouldst thou like to know how to read and write?"

"But why should the likes of me want to know how to read and write, Iván Afanásievitch?"

"What dost thou mean by 'why'? So that thou canst read books."

"And what is there in books?"

"Everything good. . . . Listen, I will bring thee a little book,—shall I?"

"But, you see, I don't know how to read, Iván Afanásievitch."

"I will read to thee."

"Why, that must be tiresome, I think?"

"How can it?! tiresome! On the contrary, it is a good remedy for tedium."

"Will you read fairy-tales?"

"Thou shalt see—to-morrow."

Pyetushkóff returned home toward evening and began to rummage in his drawers. He found several odd volumes of the "Library for Reading," five coarse Moscow romances, Nazároff's arithmetic, a child's geography with a picture of the globe on the title-page, the second part of Kaidánoff's history, two dream-books, a calendar for the year 1819, two numbers of "Galatea,"

*Natálya Dolgorúky,* by Kozlóff, and the first part of *Roslávleff*. For a long time he meditated which he should select, and finally decided to take Kozlóff's poem, and *Roslávleff*.

On the following day, Pyetushkóff dressed himself in haste, thrust both of the wretched little books under the facing of his coat, went to the baker's shop, and began to read her Zagóskin's romance. Vasilísa sat motionless, first smiled, then seemed to fall into thought . . . . then bent forward a little; her eyes narrowed, her lips parted slightly, her hands fell on her knees—she dozed. Pyetushkóff went on reading fast, unintelligibly, and in a low voice,—raised his eyes. . . .

"Vasilísa, art thou asleep?"

She gave a start, rubbed her face and stretched herself. Pyetushkóff was vexed with her and with himself. . . .

"It 's tiresome,"—said Vasilísa, lazily.

"Listen, and I 'll read thee some verses, shall I?"

"What?"

"Verses . . . . fine verses."

"No, stop; really, now, do."

Pyetushkóff briskly pulled out Kozlóff's poem, sprang to his feet, strode through the room, dashed headlong at Vasilísa, and began to read. Vasilísa threw back her head, flung wide her hands, cast a glance into Pyetushkóff's face—and

suddenly broke out into a ringing peal of merry laughter; . . . . she fairly rolled with laughter.

Iván Afanásievitch hurled the book to the floor with vexation. Vasilísa continued to laugh.

"Well, what art thou laughing at, stupid?"

Vasilísa redoubled her peals of laughter.

"Laugh on, laugh on,"—growled Pyetushkóff through his teeth.

Vasilísa clutched at her side, and groaned.

"But what art thou groaning at, thou crazy woman?"

But Vasilísa merely flourished her hands. Iván Afanásievitch seized his cap and fled from the house. With uneven steps he strode swiftly through the town, and kept on walking until he found himself at the barrier. Along the street there came suddenly the rumbling of wheels, the trampling of horses. . . . Some one called him by name. He raised his head, and beheld a commodious old-fashioned linéika.[1] In the jaunting-car, facing him, sat Mr. Bublítzyn between two young ladies, the daughters of Mr. Tiutiuryóff. The two girls were dressed exactly alike, as though to signalise their inseparable friendship; both were smiling pensively, but agreeably, and lolling their heads languidly on one side. On the other side of the jaunting-car the broad,

[1] The *linéika* is something like an Irish jaunting-car, sometimes with a cross-seat added at the rear, to match the coachman's seat in front. It has no springs.—Translator.

straw hat of the worthy Mr. Tiutiuryóff was visible, and a portion of his fat, round nape presented itself to the gaze; alongside his straw hat the mob-cap of his spouse reared itself aloft. The very position of the two parents served as a plain indication of their sincere goodwill and confidence in young Bublítzyn. And young Bublítzyn, evidently, was conscious of and prized their flattering confidence. Of course, he was sitting in an unconstrained attitude, was chatting and laughing unconstrainedly; but in the very lack of constraint of his behaviour a tender, touching respect was perceptible. And the Misses Tiutiuryóff? It would be difficult to express in words all that the attentive eye of an observer discerned in the features of the two sisters. Good principles and gentleness, and modest mirth, sorrowful comprehension of life and immovable faith in themselves, in the lofty and very beautiful vocation of man on earth, decorous attention to their youthful interlocutor, who was not, perhaps, quite their equal in the matter of intellectual endowment, but entirely worthy of indulgence on the score of his attributes of heart . . . . these were the qualities and sentiments which were depicted at that moment on the countenances of the Misses Tiutiuryóff. Bublítzyn called to Iván Afanásievitch by name on the impulse of the moment, without any reason whatsoever, out of overflowing inward satisfaction; he bowed to him in an extremely friendly

and courteous manner; the Misses Tiutiuryóff themselves looked caressingly and gently at him, as at a man with whom they were not averse to making acquaintance. . . . The kind, well-fed, peaceable horses passed Iván Afanásievitch at a gentle trot; the jaunting-car rolled smoothly along the broad road, bearing the good-natured maidenly laughter; there was a last fleeting glimpse of Mr. Tiutiuryóff's hat; the trace-horses turned their heads to the side, and bounded dashingly along over the short, green grass . . . the coachman began to whistle encouragingly and cautiously; the jaunting-car disappeared behind the willows.

Poor Pyetushkóff stood for a long time rooted to the spot.

" I 'm an orphan, a Kazán orphan," [1] he whispered at last. . . .

A tattered little brat of a boy halted in front of him, gazed timidly at him, and held out his hand. . . .

" For Christ's sake, good gentleman."

Pyetushkóff got a two-kopék piece out of his pocket.

" There, take that for thine orphanhood,"—he said with an effort, and returned to the baker's shop.—On the threshold of Vasilísa's room Iván Afanásievitch halted.

" And this,"—he thought, " this is the kind of

[1] Probably in reference to the absolute desolation created at the capture of Kazán from the Tatárs by Iván the Terrible.—Translator.

person with whom I consort! Here it is, my family! here it is! . . . And there 's Bublítzyn, and then there 's Bublítzyn."

Vasilísa, seated with her back to him and carelessly humming a tune, was winding thread. She was wearing a faded calico gown; she had braided her hair at hap-hazard. . . . It was intolerably hot in the room, and there was an odour of feather-bed and old rags; here and there on the walls, reddish, dandified cockroaches [1] were scuttling briskly about; on the decrepit chest of drawers, with holes in place of locks, lay a woman's patched shoe, by the side of a broken jar. . . . Kozlóff's poem was still lying on the floor. . . . Pyetushkóff shook his head, folded his arms, and left the room. He was hurt.

At home he gave orders that his clothes should be brought, that he might dress. Onísim dragged himself slowly off in quest of a coat. Pyetushkóff longed to challenge Onísim to a chat, but Onísim maintained a surly silence. At last Iván Afanásievitch could contain himself no longer.

"Why dost not thou ask me where I am going?"

"Why should I care to know where you are going?"

"What dost thou mean by that? See here now, some one may come on urgent business, and ask: 'Is Iván Afanásievitch at home?' And then

[1] Literally: Prussians.—Translator.

thou couldst tell him: 'Iván Afanásievitch has gone to such and such a place.'"

"On urgent business. . . . But who does come to you on urgent business?"

"Here now, art thou beginning to be impudent again? Art thou at it again?"

Onísim turned away, and began to brush the coat.

"Really, Onísim, thou art a disagreeable man."

Onísim darted an oblique glance at his master.

"And thou art always like that. Precisely that,—always."

Onísim grinned.

"But what 's the use of my asking you whither you are going, Iván Afanásievitch? As if I did n't know! To the baker's girl!"

"What nonsense! That 's a lie! I 'm not going to her at all. I don't intend to go to the baker's girl any more."

Onísim screwed up his eyes, and shook his brush. Pyetushkóff had expected approbation; but his servant preserved silence.

"It is n't fitting,"—went on Iván Afanásievitch in a severe tone,—"it is indecent. . . . Come, now, say what thou thinkest."

"What 's the use of my thinking? Do as you please. Why should I think?"

Pyetushkóff donned his coat.—"He does n't believe me, the brute,"—he thought to himself.

He left the house, but did not drop in to call on

any one. He roamed about the streets. He directed his attention to the setting sun. At last, about eight o'clock, he returned home. He was smiling; he kept incessantly shrugging his shoulders, as though in wonder at his own stupidity. —"There, now,"—he thought;—"that 's what it means to have a strong will. . . ."

On the following day Pyetushkóff rose quite late. He had not passed a very good night, he went nowhere until the evening, and was frightfully bored. Pyetushkóff read through all his horrid little books, and praised aloud one of the romances in the "Library for Reading." When he went to bed, he ordered Onísim to give him a pipe. Onísim handed him a very wretched little Turkish pipe. Pyetushkóff began to smoke; the pipe bubbled hoarsely, like a broken-winded horse.

"How nasty!"—exclaimed Iván Afanásievitch;—"and where 's my cherry-wood pipe?"

"Why, at the baker's shop,"—calmly replied Onísim.

Pyetushkóff winked convulsively.

"Well? Do you command me to go for it?"

"No, it is n't necessary; don't go. . . I don't want it; don't go, dost thou hear?"

"I obey, sir."

He got through the night somehow. In the morning, Onísim, according to custom, presented to Pyetushkóff, on a plate with blue flowers, a

fresh, white roll. Iván Afanásievitch looked out of the window, and asked Onísim:

"Didst thou go to the bake-shop?"

"Who should go, if not I?"

"Ah!"

Pyetushkóff sank into meditation.

"Tell me, please, didst thou see any one there?"

"Of course I did."

"Whom didst thou see there, for example?"

"Vasilísa, of course."

Iván Afanásievitch fell silent. Onísim cleared the table, and was on the point of leaving the room. . . .

"Onísim!"—called Pyetushkóff, faintly.

"What do you wish?"

"A . . . did she inquire about me?"

"Of course she did n't."

Pyetushkóff gritted his teeth.—"There,"—he thought,—"there 's love for you. . . ." He hung his head.—"And I certainly have been ridiculous,"—he pursued his meditations;—"I took a fancy to read poetry to her! Eká! Why, she 's a fool! Why, the only thing fit for her, fool that she is, is to lie on the oven, and eat pancakes! Why, she 's a blockhead, a perfect blockhead; an uneducated creature of the petty burgher class!"

"She has n't come . . ." he whispered two hours later, as he sat in the same place;—"she

has not come! What do you think of that? She certainly could see that I left her in anger; she certainly might have known that I was offended! There 's love for thee! And she did n't even inquire whether I was well! 'Is Iván Afanásievitch well?'—quoth she. This is the second day that she has n't seen me,—and she does n't mind! . . . . Perhaps she has even been pleased to have another meeting with that Bub . . . . The lucky dog! Phew, damn it, what a fool I am!"

Pyetushkóff rose, paced the room in silence, halted, frowned slightly, and scratched the back of his head.—"Never mind,"—he said aloud:—"I 'll just go to her. I must see what she is doing yonder. I must make her feel ashamed. Positively. . . . I will go. Ónka! Dress me!"

"Come now,"—he thought, as he was dressing;—"let 's see what will happen. Just as likely as not, she will be angry with me. And, in fact, here a man has been going-going, going-going to see her, and all of a sudden, without rhyme or reason, he has stopped going! So now, we shall see!"

Iván Afanásievitch left the house, and trudged off to the bake-shop. He paused at the wicket-gate: he must spruce himself up, and tighten his belt. . . . Pyetushkóff grasped his coat-tails with both hands, and came near tearing them off altogether. . . . Convulsively did he crane his

outstretched neck, fastened the top hook of his collar, and heaved a sigh. . . .

"Why are you standing there?"—Praskóvya Ivánovna cried to him through the window.—"Come in."

Pyetushkóff started and went in. Praskóvya Ivánovna met him on the threshold.

"Why did n't you favour us with your company yesterday, dear little father? Did some trifling indisposition prevent you?"

"Yes, somehow I had a headache yesterday. . . ."

"You ought to have put a cucumber on each temple, dear little father. It would have disappeared instantly. And does your dear head ache now?"

"No, it does not ache."

"Well, thanks be to thee, O Lord!"

Iván Afanásievitch betook himself to the back room. Vasilísa caught sight of him.

"Ah! Good morning, Iván Afanásitch!"

"Good morning, Vasilísa Timofyéevna."

"What did you do with the siphon, Iván Afanásitch?"

"The siphon? What siphon?"

"The siphon . . . . our siphon. You must have carried it off to your house. You 're such a . . . . Lord forgive! . . ."

Pyetushkóff assumed a cold and dignified aspect.

" I will order my man to look. As I was not here yesterday,"—he said significantly. . . .

" Akh, why that 's a fact, you were n't here yesterday."—Vasilísa squatted down on her heels and began to rummage in a chest. . . . " Aunty! Hey, aunty! "

" Wha-a-at? "

" Didst thou take my kerchief, I 'd like to know? "

" What kerchief? "

" Why, the yellow one."

" The yellow one? "

" Yes, the yellow one with the flowered pattern."

" No, I did n't take it."

Pyetushkóff bent over Vasilísa.

" Listen to me, Vasilísa; hearken to what I am going to say to thee. 'T is not a question now of siphons or of kerchiefs; thou canst busy thyself over that nonsense at some other time."

Vasilísa did not stir from the spot, and merely raised her head.

" Do thou tell me, conscientiously—dost thou love me or not? That 's what I want to know, in short! "

" Akh, what a man you are, Iván Afanásievitch! . . . . Well, yes, of course."

" But if thou lovest me, then why didst not thou come to me yesterday? Didst thou not have the time? Well, then thou mightest have sent to

inquire whether I was ill, whether I was dead. But thou didst worry thyself little. I might even die yonder, all by myself, and thou wouldst not come!"

"Ekh, Iván Afanásievitch, a body can't think of one thing all the time; there 's work to be done."

"Of course,"—responded Pyetushkóff,—"and, nevertheless . . . . And it is n't proper to laugh at your elders. . . . It is n't nice. However, there 's no harm, in certain cases. . . . But where 's my pipe?"

"Here is your pipe."

Pyetushkóff began to smoke.

## VII

Several days passed quite peacefully to all appearance. But a thunder-storm was brewing. Pyetushkóff tormented himself, was jealous, never took his eyes from Vasilísa, watched her anxiously, and grew frightfully tired of her. Finally, one evening, Vasilísa dressed herself more carefully than usual, and seizing a convenient opportunity, she went off somewhere to make a visit. Night descended, and she had not returned. Pyetushkóff returned to his lodgings at dawn, and at eight o'clock in the morning ran to the bake-shop. . . . Vasilísa had not arrived. With an inexpressible sinking at the heart he

waited for her until dinner-time . . . . and they sat down to the table without her. . . .

"Where can she have disappeared to?"—said Praskóvya Ivánovna, indifferently.

"You spoil her; you simply spoil her completely!"—Pyetushkóff kept repeating.

"Ih, dear little father! one can't keep track of a young girl!"—replied Praskóvya Ivánovna. —"God be with her! If only she had done her work. . . . . Why should n't a person have a little fun? . . . ."

Iván Afanásievitch was seized with a cold chill. At last, toward evening, Vasilísa made her appearance. That was all he was waiting for. Pyetushkóff rose solemnly from his chair, folded his arms, and contracted his brows in a stern frown. . . . But Vasilísa looked him boldly in the eye, laughed audaciously, and, without giving him a chance to utter a word, walked briskly into her room and locked the door. Iván Afanásievitch opened his mouth and stared in amazement at Praskóvya Ivánovna. . . . Praskóvya Ivánovna dropped her eyes. Iván Afanásievitch stood there for a while, groped for his cap, put it on his head askew, and left the house without shutting his mouth.

He reached home, took a leather cushion and flung himself with it on the divan, face to the wall. Onísim peeped in from the anteroom, entered the chamber, leaned his back against the

door, took a pinch of snuff, and crossed his legs.

"Are you ill, Iván Afanásievitch?"—he asked Pyetushkóff.

Pyetushkóff made no reply.

"Do you order me to go for the doctor?"—went on Onísim, after waiting a little.

"I 'm well. . . . Get out!"—said Iván Afanásievitch in a dull tone.

"Well? . . . . No, you are n't well, Iván Afanásievitch. . . . What sort of health is this?"

Pyetushkóff maintained silence.

"You 'd better take a look at yourself. Why, you 've grown so thin that you simply have become unrecognisable. And all for what? When one comes to think of it, he loses mind and reason, by God! And a nobleman, to boot!"

Onísim paused. . . . Pyetushkóff did not stir.

"Is this the way noblemen behave?—Come, you might have had your fling . . . . why not? . . . . you might have had your fling, and dismissed it with a box on the ear. But what 's this like? Why, actually, one may say, 't is falling in love with Satan more than with the bright falcon."

Iván Afanásievitch only writhed.

"Come, really, this won't do, Iván Afanásievitch. If any other person had said to me concerning you, 'Here now, here now, what goings-on!' I would have said to him: 'Thou 'rt a fool.

Begone! For whom dost thou take me? Dost suppose I 'm going to believe that?' But now I see for myself, and I don't believe. Why, there can't be anything worse than this. Has she been giving you some sort of philter, pray? What is there about her, anyway? If you would use common sense, 't is all utter nonsense—simply, fit to spit upon. And she does n't even know how to speak correctly. . . . She 's just simply a common wench! Even worse than that!"

"Get out!"—moaned Iván Afanásievitch into his pillow.

"No—I won't get out, Iván Afanásievitch. Who should speak, if not I? Just look at the facts. Here you are breaking your heart . . . . and for what? Come, for what? good gracious, tell me!"

"Do go away, Onísim,"—groaned Pyetushkóff again.

Onísim held his tongue awhile, out of decorum.

"And just to think,"—he began again:—"she feels no gratitude whatever. Any other woman would n't have known how to do enough to please you; but she! . . . . She does n't even think of you. Why, it 's a downright scandal. And it 's impossible even to repeat the things people are saying about you; it even makes me ashamed. Well, if I could only have known this beforehand, I 'd have given her . . . ."

"Get out, you devil, I tell you for the last

time!"—yelled Pyetushkóff, but without stirring from his place or raising his head.

"Good mercy, Iván Afanásievitch!"—went on the implacable Onísim.—"I 'm telling you for your own good. Spit on the whole thing, Iván Afanásievitch, simply spit on it, heed me. If you won't do that, I 'll fetch the vile woman hither; you can get rid of her at once. You will laugh at it yourself afterward; you will say to me: 'Onísim, it 's amazing what things one does sometimes!'—Come, judge for yourself: you know that such as she are as plentiful with us as dogs . . . . all you have to do is to whistle . . . ."

Pyetushkóff sprang from the divan like a madman . . . . but, to the astonishment of Onísim, who had already raised both hands on a level with his cheeks, he sat down again, as though some one had knocked the legs out from under him. . . . Tears rolled down over his pale face, a tuft of hair stood out over his temple, his eyes gazed dimly forth . . . . his distorted lips quivered . . . . his head sank on his breast.

Onísim looked at Pyetushkóff, and flung himself heavily on his knees.

"Dear little father, Iván Afanásievitch,"—he cried;—"your Well-Born! Please to chastise me, fool that I am! I have troubled you, Iván Afanásievitch. . . . How dared I! Please to chastise me, your Well-Born. . . Is it worth while for you to weep because of my stupid

speeches . . . . dear little father, Iván Afanásievitch. . . ."

But Pyetushkóff did not even look at his servant, turned away, and huddled down again in one corner of the divan.

Onísim rose, went to his master, stood over him, and clutched at his own hair a couple of times.

"Won't you undress, dear little father? . . . You 'd better go to bed . . . . you 'd better eat a bit . . . . please don't grieve. . . . 'T is only with half-sorrow, all this amounts to nothing . . . . everything will come right,"—he said to him every two minutes.

But Pyetushkóff did not rise from the divan, and only shrugged his shoulders from time to time, and drew his knees up to his body. . . .

Onísim never left him all night long. Toward morning Pyetushkóff fell asleep, but not for long. At seven o'clock he rose from the divan, pale, dishevelled, exhausted, and called for tea.

Onísim prepared the samovár obsequiously and briskly.

"Iván Afanásievitch,"—he began, at last, in a timid voice,—"you are not pleased to be angry with me, are you?"

"What should I be angry with thee about, Onísim?"—replied poor Pyetushkóff.—"Thou wert entirely right yesterday, and I agree with thee perfectly about everything."

"I only did it out of zeal, Iván Afanásievitch. . . . ."

"I know that it was out of zeal."

Pyetushkóff fell silent, and dropped his eyes.

Onísim saw that things were in a bad way.

"Iván Afanásievitch,"—he began suddenly.

"What?"

"I 'll bring Vasilísa hither, if you like?"

Pyetushkóff crimsoned.

"No, Onísim, I don't like." ("Yes, let it go! she 'll come!"—he thought to himself.)—"I must display firmness. All this is folly. Yesterday . . . you know . . . . 'T is a disgrace. Thou art right. I must make an end of all this at one blow, as the saying is. Is n't that so?"

"'T is the plain truth you deign to speak, Iván Afanásievitch."

Again Pyetushkóff buried himself in thought. He was amazed at himself; he did not seem to recognise himself. He sat motionless and stared straight at the floor. His thoughts were in a commotion within him, like smoke or mist, and his breast felt heavy and empty at one and the same time.

"Well, what does it all amount to, after all?"—he sometimes thought, and calmed down again.—"Nonsense, self-indulgence!"—he said aloud, and passed his hand over his face, shook himself, and again his hand fell on his knees, again his eyes riveted themselves on the floor.

Onísim gazed attentively and sorrowfully at his master.

Pyetushkóff raised his head.

"Tell me, Onísim,"—he began,—"is it true that such witches' philters do exist?"

"They do, sir, certainly, sir,"—replied Onísim, thrusting out his leg.—"Now, for example, you know Under-Officer Krupovátoff, don't you? . . His brother was ruined through witchcraft. They bewitched him to a common old woman, to a cook, just think of that! They gave him a bit of plain rye bread to eat, with the spell, of course. So then Krupovátoff's brother fell head over heels in love with the cook, and ran about everywhere after the cook; he simply adored her, and could never gaze his fill. Whatever she bade him do, he obeyed on the instant. Even in the presence of others, in the presence of strangers, she made a display of her power over him. Well, and she drove him into a consumption at last. So he died, did Krupovátoff's brother. And she was a cook, and she is still, and old, very old." (Onísim took a pinch of snuff.)—"Damn all those hussies and females."

"She does n't love me at all—that is clear; in short, there can be no doubt of that,"—muttered Pyetushkóff in a low voice, making motions with his head and hands the while, as though he were explaining to an entirely strange man a thing of which he was wholly ignorant.

"Yes,"—pursued Onísim,—"there are such women."

"There are,"—repeated Pyetushkóff, dejectedly, not exactly in a tone of inquiry, nor yet as though surprised.

Onísim surveyed his master attentively.

"Iván Afanásievitch,"—he began,—"had n't you better take a bite of something?"

"Take a bite of something?"—repeated Pyetushkóff.

"Or would n't you like your pipe?"

"Pipe?"—repeated Pyetushkóff.

"So that 's what it has come to!"—growled Onísim: "this means that he 's gone daft."

## VIII

The clumping of boots resounded in the anteroom, and the customary suppressed cough which announces the arrival of an inferior person made itself audible there.—Onísim went out, but immediately returned accompanied by a tiny soldier of the garrison with the face of an old woman, clad in a patched overcoat which had been worn to the point of turning yellow, devoid of trousers, and devoid of neckcloth. Pyetushkóff started—but the soldier drew himself up in military fashion, wished him good morning, and handed him a large envelope sealed with the official seal. The envelope contained a note from the

Major in command of the garrison: he ordered Pyetushkóff to him instantly and without delay.

Pyetushkóff turned the note over in his hands —and could not refrain from asking the messenger: "Did he know why the Major had ordered him to present himself?"—although he understood perfectly the utter futility of such a question.

"We cannot know!"[1]—shouted the soldier with an effort, but in a barely audible voice, as though he were only half awake.

"And he is not ordering the other officers to him?" went on Pyetushkóff.

"We cannot know!"—shouted the soldier a second time, in the same sort of tone.

"Very well, go,"—said Pyetushkóff.

The soldier made a military turn to the left, stamping his foot as he did so, and slapping himself with the palm of his hand lower down than the spine (that was the style in the "twenties"), and withdrew.

Pyetushkóff silently exchanged glances with Onísim, who immediately assumed an anxious air —and went to the Major.

This Major was a man of sixty, corpulent and awkward, with a swollen, red face, a short neck, and a perpetual tremor in his fingers, which arose from a too profuse use of vodka. He belonged to the category of so-called "Bourbons," that is

[1] The official form of "I don't know."—Translator.

to say, of soldiers who had advanced in the service from the lower ranks, had taught himself to read and write, and spoke with difficulty, partly on account of asthma, partly from inability to comprehend his own thought. His temperament exhibited all the variations known to science: in the morning, before vodka, he was melancholy; in the middle of the day, choleric; and toward evening, phlegmatic—that is to say, at that time he only snuffled and bellowed, until he was put to bed. Iván Afanásievitch presented himself to him during his choleric period. He found him sitting on a divan, in his dressing-gown open at the breast, and with a pipe in his teeth. A fat, crop-eared cat had cuddled down beside him.

"Aha! So he has come!"—growled the Major, turning askance upon Pyetushkóff his leaden little eyes, and without stirring from his place.—"Come now, sit down;—come, I 'll give it to you well.—I 've had my eye on the watch for fellows of your stamp this long time . . . yes, I have."

Pyetushkóff sank down on a chair.

"Because,"—burst out the Major, with an unexpected impulse of his whole body,—"you are an officer, you know; so you must conduct yourself according to regulations.—If you were a soldier, I would simply give you a whipping,—and that would be the end of it; but you happen to be an officer. Is n't it outrageous? You

ought to be ashamed of yourself. Do you think it 's nice?"

"Permit me to inquire to what these hints point?"—Pyetushkóff was beginning. . . .

"No arguing with me! I have a deadly hatred of that. I 've told you I don't like it; well, and that 's all there is to be said! There now, your hooks are not according to regulations; what a disgrace!—He sits day after day in a bake-shop; and he 's a nobleman to boot! He has set up a petticoat there—and there he sits.—Well, damn her, that petticoat!—And they actually say that he puts the loaves in the oven himself.—He sullies his uniform . . . . yes."

"Permit me to report,"—said Pyetushkóff, whose heart turned cold,—"that all this, so far as I can judge, refers to my private life, so to speak. . . ."

"Don't argue with me, I tell you!—Private life—he dares to argue! If I had anything against you on the score of the service, I 'd send you straight off to the *gwárd*-house!—*Allé marshir!*—Because I 'm sworn to do it.—A whole birch-grove was, probably, used up on me myself: so I know the service; all those proceedings are very familiar to me. But you are to understand, I refer in particular to the uniform. Thou art disgracing the uniform—yes, I 'm acting like a father . . . . yes. Because all that is entrusted to me. I must answer for it.—And here you are

arguing!"—shouted the Major, with a sudden access of ferocity, and his face turned purple, and froth made its appearance on his lips, and the cat elevated its tail and sprang to the floor.—"Yes, and do you know. . . Yes, do you know, that I can . . . . that I can do everything! everything, everything!—And do you understand to whom you are talking?—Your superior officer commands—and you argue! Your superior officer. . . . Your superior officer! . . ."

Here the Major even began to cough and rattle in his throat—and poor Pyetushkóff merely drew himself up and turned pale, as he sat on the edge of his chair.

"See that everything," . . . . pursued the trembling Major, waving his hand imperiously, —"see that everything . . . . toes the mark! First-class behaviour!—I won't tolerate any disorder! Thou mayest consort with whom thou choosest—I don't care a fig about that! But if thou art well-born,—well, then, you know, act like a nobleman!—I won't have thee putting the loaves in the oven! I won't have thee calling a draggle-tailed, low-born woman 'aunty'! I won't have thee disgracing the uniform! Hold thy tongue! Don't argue!"

The Major's voice broke. He took breath, and turning toward the door of the anteroom, he shouted:—"Frólka, thou rascal! Herrings!"

Pyetushkóff rose briskly and darted out, almost

knocking off his legs the page-boy who was running in with sliced herrings and a huge caraffe of vodka on a yellow tray.

"Hold thy tongue! Don't argue!"—resounded behind Pyetushkóff the spasmodic exclamations of the incensed commander.

## IX

A STRANGE feeling took possession of Iván Afanásievitch, when he suddenly found himself in the street.

"Why, what makes it seem as though I were walking in my sleep?"—he thought to himself. —"Have I lost my mind, I 'd like to know? For this certainly is incredible. Come, damn it! she has ceased to love me, and I have ceased to love her, well, and . . . . what is there remarkable about that?"

Pyetushkóff contracted his brows in a frown.

"There must be an end to this, in short,"—he said almost aloud;—"I will go and have a definitive explanation for the last time, so that afterward not a trace of it may be left."

With hasty strides, Pyetushkóff betook himself to the bake-shop. The nephew of Luká the hired man, a diminutive brat, the friend and intimate of the goat which lived in the courtyard, sprang briskly to the wicket-gate as soon as he caught sight of Iván Afanásievitch.

Praskóvya Ivánovna came out to greet Pyetushkóff.

"Is n't your niece at home?"—asked Pyetushkóff.

"No, sir, she is n't."

Pyetushkóff inwardly rejoiced at Vasilísa's absence.

"I have come to have an explanation with you, Praskóvya Ivánovna."

"What about, dear little father?"

"Why, about this. You understand that after all . . . . that has taken place . . . . after such goings-on, so to say" (Pyetushkóff was getting somewhat confused) . . . . "in a word. . . . . But, please don't be angry with me."

"Yes, sir."

"On the contrary, enter into my position, Praskóvya Ivánovna."

"Yes, sir."

"You are a sensible woman, you understand yourself, that . . . . that I can no longer come to your house."

"Yes, sir,"—said Praskóvya Ivánovna in a sing-song tone.

"Believe me, I greatly regret it; I confess it even gives me pain, genuine pain. . . ."

"You must know best, sir,"—returned Praskóvya Ivánovna, with composure.—"It must be as you like, sir. And now, if you will allow me, I 'll give you your bill."

Pyetushkóff had not in the least expected such ready assent. On the whole, he had not desired "assent"; he would have liked merely to frighten Praskóvya Ivánovna, and especially Vasilísa. He was discomfited.

"I know,"—he began,—"that this will not be in the least displeasing to Vasilísa; on the contrary, I think she will be glad."

Praskóvya Ivánovna got her reckoning-frame[1] and began to rattle the bone balls.

"On the other hand,"—went on Pyetushkóff, who waxed more and more agitated,—"if, for example, Vasilísa would explain to me her conduct . . . . possibly . . . . I . . . . although, of course . . . . I don't know, possibly, I might see that, in reality, there was no harm whatever in it."

"You owe me thirty-seven rubles and forty kopéks, paper money, dear little father,"—remarked Praskóvya Ivánovna.—"Here, would you like to verify the account?"

Iván Afanásievitch answered never a word.

"Eighteen dinners at seventy kopéks apiece: twelve rubles sixty kopéks."

"So you and I are to part, Praskóvya Ivánovna?"

"How can it be helped, dear little father?

[1] The use of the abacus is very extensive, even at the present day, among the merchant class in Russia. They perform long and intricate calculations with amazing facility.—Translator.

Such things do happen. Twelve samovárs,[1] at ten kopéks apiece. . . ."

"But just tell me, Praskóvya Ivánovna, where did Vasilísa go, and why did she . . ."

"Why, I did n't question her, dear little father. . . . . One ruble twenty kopéks, silver money."

Iván Afanásievitch became thoughtful.

"Kvas and sour-cabbage soup,"—went on Praskóvya Ivánovna, separating the beads on her counting-frame, not with her forefinger, but with her third finger,—"to the amount of half a ruble, silver. Sugar and rolls for tea, half a ruble, silver. Four packets of tobacco, bought by your order, eighty kopéks, silver. Paid the tailor, Kupriyán Apollónoff . . . ."

Iván Afanásievitch suddenly raised his head, put out his hand, and mixed up the beads.

"What are you doing, dear little father? !" —said Praskóvya Ivánovna.—"Don't you believe me?"

"Praskóvya Ivánovna,"—replied Pyetushkóff, with a hurried smile,—"I have changed my mind. I was only jesting, you know. Let us, rather, remain friends, as of old. What nonsense! How can you and I part, tell me, please?"

Praskóvya Ivánovna hung her head and did not answer him.

"Come, we have had our quarrel out—and

[1] Meaning that the samovár had been prepared twelve times.—Translator.

that 's the end of it,"—went on Iván Afanásievitch, pacing the room, rubbing his hands, and, as it were, entering again upon his former rights.—" Amen! see here, I 'd better smoke a pipe."

Praskóvya Ivánovna still did not stir from the spot. . . .

" I see that you are angry with me,"—said Pyetushkóff.—" Perhaps I have hurt your feelings. Come, what of that? Be magnanimous and forgive."

" Hurt my feelings, forsooth, dear little father! How have you hurt them? . . . Only, if you please, dear little father,"—added Praskóvya Ivánovna, with an inclination,—" be so good as not to come to our house any more."

" What? "

" It is n't proper for you to associate with us, your Well-Born. So please do us the favour. . . ."

" But why? " stammered the astounded Pyetushkóff.

" Why, just because, dear little father. Show us that divine favour."

" But no, Praskóvya Ivánovna, we must have an explanation! . . . ."

" Vasilísa beseeches you, dear little father. She says: ' I 'm grateful, very grateful, and I feel it, only, in future, your Well-Born, relieve me of your presence.' "

Praskóvya Ivánovna bowed down almost to Pyetushkóff's feet.

"Vasilísa, you say, asks me not to come?"

"Exactly so, dear little father, your Well-Born. As you were pleased to favour us with a visit to-day, and said that you did not wish to visit us any more,—that is to say, I was just delighted, dear little father, and thinks I to myself: 'There now, and thank God, that everything has come right.' For otherwise, my own tongue would n't have twisted itself round to speak. . . . Show us that favour, dear little father."

Pyetushkóff reddened and paled almost simultaneously. Praskóvya Ivánovna still continued to make obeisances. . . .

"Very well,"—exclaimed Iván Afanásievitch, sharply.—"Good-bye."

He wheeled round abruptly and put on his cap.

"And about the little bill, dear little father. . . ."

"Send it . . . my orderly will pay you."

Pyetushkóff left the bake-shop with a firm tread, and did not even glance round.

## X

Two weeks passed. At first Pyetushkóff kept up his courage extremely well, went out in society, and visited his comrades, with the exception, of course, of Bublítzyn; but, despite the exag-

gerated praises of Onísim, he nearly went out of his mind, at last, with grief, jealousy, and tedium. Nothing afforded him any consolation except chats with Onísim about Vasilísa. Pyetushkóff began the conversation, and was always the aggressor; Onísim reluctantly answered him.

"But it is a strange thing,"—Iván Afanásievitch said, for example, as he lay on his divan, while Onísim, according to his custom, stood leaning against the door, with his hands clasped behind him:—"when you come to think of it: come, now, what did I see in that girl? There 's nothing remarkable about her, it strikes me. She is kind-hearted, it is true. One must not deny her that merit."

"Kind-hearted — indeed!"— replied Onísim with displeasure.

"Come, Onísim,"—went on Pyetushkóff,—"one must speak the truth. Now that is an affair of the past: it makes no difference to me now, but justice is justice. Thou dost not know her. She is extremely kind-hearted. She never lets a single beggar go empty-handed away: she gives him at least a crust of bread. Well, and she has a cheerful disposition—that must also be said of her."

"There you go, inventing still! Where did you find her cheerful disposition?"

"I tell thee . . . thou dost not know her. And she is not greedy of money, either . . . .

that 's another point. She does not have an eye on her own interests, there 's no denying that. Well, and although I . . . . yet I gave her nothing, as thou knowest."

"That 's exactly why she threw you over."

"No, that was not the reason!"—replied Pyetushkóff with a sigh.

"Why, you 're in love with her even now,"—retorted Onísim, viciously.—"You 'd be glad enough to go back to your former position."

"There thou art talking nonsense. No, brother, evidently, thou dost not know me either. They turned me out of the house, and I won't go and make obeisance to them after that. No, excuse me. No, I tell thee, believe me, all that is now a thing of the past."

"God grant it! God grant it!"

"But why should n't I be just to her, even now? Come, now, if I were to say that she is not good-looking,—who would believe me?"

"A fine beauty you have found!"

"Come, find me,—well, name to me any one who is better-looking than she. . . . ."

"Well, then, go back to her! . . . ."

"Eká! But is that what I am talking for, pray? Understand me. . . ."

"Okh! I understand you,"—replied Onísim with a heavy sigh.

Another week passed. Pyetushkóff ceased even to talk with his Onísim; he ceased to go out.

From morning till night he lay on his divan, with his hands thrown up over his head. He began to grow thin and pale, he ate reluctantly and hurriedly, he did not smoke at all. Onísim merely shook his head as he looked at him.

" Surely you are not feeling well, Iván Afanásievitch,"—he said to him more than once.

" Yes, I 'm all right,"—replied Pyetushkóff.

At last, one fine day (Onísim was not at home), Pyetushkóff rose, rummaged in his chest of drawers, donned his heavy cloak, although the sun was pretty hot, emerged stealthily into the street, and a quarter of an hour later returned home again. . . . He was carrying something under his cloak. . . .

Onísim was not at home. All the morning he had been sitting in his tiny den, thinking matters over, grumbling and swearing through his set teeth, and, at last, he had set off to see Vasilísa.

He found her in the bake-shop. Praskóvya Ivánovna was asleep on the oven, snoring regularly and languidly.

" Akh, good morning, Onísim Sergyéevitch,"—said Vasilísa with a smile.—" Why have n't we seen you this long time? "

" Morning."

" What makes you so downcast? Won't you have some tea? "

" 'T is not a question of me now,"—returned Onísim, testily.

"What, then?"

"What! Dost not thou understand me, pray? 'What?!' What hast thou done to my master? Come, tell me that."

"What have I done?"

"Thou hast done something. . . . Just come and look at him. The first anybody knows, he 'll fall ill and die altogether."

"How am I to blame, Onísim Sergyéitch?"

"How?!—God knows. He fairly adores thee, see? But thou hast treated him as though he were a fellow like me, the Lord forgive thee! 'Don't come,' sayest thou, 'I 'm tired of thee.' Anyway, if he is n't an important person, he 's a gentleman all the same. He 's a nobleman, all the same. . . . Dost thou understand that?"

"But he 's so tiresome, Onísim Sergyéitch. . . ."

"Tiresome! But thou must needs always have jovial men!"

"Well, he 's not exactly tiresome; but he 's such an irascible, jealous man."

"Akh, thou Ástrakhan Tzarévna Milikitrísa! See there, now, he has worried thee!"

"Why, you yourself, Onísim Sergyéitch, as I remember, were angry with him. 'Why does he associate with them,' says you; 'why is he always going to them?'"

"What of that? Was I to praise him for that, I 'd like to know?"

"Well, then, why are you angry with me now? You see, he has stopped coming."

Onísim even stamped.

"But what am I to do with him, if he 's such a crazy man?"—he added, lowering his voice.

"Then how am I to blame? How can I help you?"

"This is how: come along with me to him."

"The Lord forbid!"

"Why wilt not thou go?"

"Why won't I go to him? Good mercy!"

"Why? And then, see here, he said that thou wert kind-hearted. I see how kind-hearted thou art."

"But what good can I do him?"

"Well, I know all about that. Things must be pretty bad if I come to thee. Evidently, I could think of no other means."

Onísim paused for a moment.

"Come, let 's go, Vasilísa; please come along."

"But I don't want to associate with him again, Onísim Sergyéitch. . . ."

"That is n't necessary—who told thee that it was? But so,—say a couple of words to him: 'Why do you deign to grieve?'—say . . . 'Stop it. . . .' That 's all."

"Really, Onísim Sergyéitch. . . ."

"Come now, dost want me to bow down before thee, pray? Come, if thou wilt have it—

here 's an obeisance for thee . . . . and here 's another obeisance for thee."

" But, really. . . ."

" What a woman! Even honours don't move her! . . . ."

At last Vasilísa consented, threw a kerchief over her head, and went off in company with Onísim.

" Stand here a bit, in the anteroom,"—he said to her, when they reached Pyetushkóff's quarters,—" and I 'll go and announce to the master. . . . ."

He entered Iván Afanásievitch's room.

Pyetushkóff was standing in the middle of the room, with both hands thrust into his pockets, with his legs straddled to an exaggerated degree and rocking slowly backward and forward. His face was flaming, his eyes were beaming.

" Good morning, Onísim,"—he lisped in a friendly way, pronouncing the consonants of his words very badly and languidly:—" Good morning, my good fellow. While thou wert gone, I . . . . he, he, he! "—Pyetushkóff began to laugh and peck forward with his nose.—" Really, now, he, he, he! . . . . However,"—he added, striving to assume a dignified mien:—" I 'm all right." —He tried to lift one leg, but came near toppling over and, by way of putting a good face on the matter, he said in a bass voice:—" Man, give me my pipe! "

Onísim stared in amazement at his master, and glanced around. . . . On the window-sill stood an empty, dark-green bottle with the label: "The Best Jamaica Rum."

"I have drunk it, brother, and that 's all,"—went on Pyetushkóff,—"I took and drank it, and that 's all there is to say. And where hast thou been? tell me . . . don't be ashamed . . . tell me. Thou narratest well."

"Good gracious, Iván Afanásievitch,"—roared Onísim.

"So be it. And so be it. And I forgive my dear one, my dear one,"—returned Pyetushkóff, with a vague wave of his hand. "I forgive everybody, I forgive thee, and I forgive Vasilísa, and everybody, I forgive everybody. But I 've drunk it, brother. . . . I 've dru-unk it, brother. . . . What 's that?"—he suddenly cried, pointing at the door of the anteroom: "Who 's there?"

"There 's nobody there,"—hastily replied Onísim.—"Who should be there? . . . Where are you going?"

"No, no,"—repeated Pyetushkóff, wresting himself from Onísim's hands:—"Let me go,—I saw,—don't tell me,—I saw there,—let me go. . . . . Vasilísa!"—he suddenly shrieked.

Pyetushkóff turned pale.

"Well . . . . Well, why dost not thou come in?"—he began at last.—"Come in, Vasilísa, come in! I 'm very glad to see thee, Vasilísa."

Vasilísa looked at Onísim—and entered the room. Pyetushkóff approached her. . . . He was breathing deeply and at long intervals. Onísim watched them. Vasilísa cast timorous, sidelong glances at both of them.

"Sit down, Vasilísa,"—began Iván Afanásievitch again:—"I thank thee for coming. Excuse me, if I . . . . how shall I say it? . . . that I am in such an unseemly state. I could not foresee this, I could n't possibly, you must agree to that. Come, sit down here, on the divan. . . . I think I am expressing myself correctly?"

Vasilísa sat down.

"Well, good morning,"—went on Pyetushkóff.—"And how art thou getting along? What nice things hast thou been doing?"

"I 'm well, thank God, Iván Afanásievitch. And how are you?"

"I? as thou seest! Killed! And killed by whom? Killed by thee, Vasilísa. But I 'm not angry with thee. Only, I 'm killed. Just ask this man here." (He pointed at Onísim.) "Don't mind if I am drunk. I am drunk, that 's a fact; only, I 'm killed. I 'm drunk because I 'm killed."

"God have mercy, Iván Afanásievitch!"

"Killed, Vasilísa, I tell thee. Do thou believe me. I have never deceived thee. Well, and how is thy aunt?"

"Well, Iván Afanásievitch. Many thanks."

Pyetushkóff began to stagger violently.

" But you are ill to-day, Iván Afanásievitch. You ought to go to bed."

" No, I 'm well, Vasilísa. No, don't say that I 'm not well; but say, rather, that I have plunged into vice, that I have lost my morality. That would be just. I should not dispute that."

Iván Afanásievitch swayed backward. Onísim sprang forward and supported his master.

" And who 's to blame? I 'll tell thee, if thou wishest, who 's to blame; shall I?

" I am to blame, I, first of all. What ought I to have done? I ought to have said to thee: ' Vasilísa, I love thee.' Well, good. Come, wilt thou marry me? Wilt thou? 'T is true that thou art of the burgher class, let us say; but that is nothing. That sort of thing is done. There was an acquaintance of mine, for example: he also married in that way. He took a Finnish woman. He went and married her. And thou wouldst have been well off with me. I am a kind man, God is my witness, I am! Thou must not mind if I am drunk, but rather do thou look into my heart. Here, now, ask this . . . . man. So it turns out that I am the guilty person. But now, of course, I am killed."

Iván Afanásievitch grew more and more in need of Onísim's support.

" And, nevertheless, 't was a sin on thy part, a great sin. I loved thee, I revered thee, I . . . . what did I not do? And even now I 'm ready

to be married this very minute. Wilt thou? Only say so, and we 'll be married immediately. Only thou hast mortally wounded my feelings . . . . mortally. Thou mightest have refused me thyself, or through thy aunt, through that horrible fat woman. For thou wert my only joy. For I am a homeless man, a poor, lonely orphan! Whom can I persuade to love me now? Who is there to say a kind word to me? For I 'm a poor, lonely man,—a full orphan,—as poor as a church mouse. Ask thi . . . ." Iván Afanásievitch fell to weeping.—" Vasilísa, hearken to what I have to say to thee,"—he went on:—" permit me to go to thee as of yore. Be not afraid . . . . I will be very discreet. Do thou go to whomsoever thou wishest, I won't mind: just that, without reproaches, seest thou. Come, dost thou consent? Wouldst thou like to have me go down on my knees?"—(And Iván Afanásievitch began to bend his knees, but Onísim caught him under the arm-pits.)—" Let me go! 'T is no business of thine! 'T is a question of the happiness of a whole life, dost understand? And thou art in the way. . . ."

Vasilísa did not know what to say.

" Thou wilt not . . . Well, as thou seest fit! God bless thee! In that case, farewell! Farewell, Vasilísa. I wish thee all happiness and prosperity . . . . and I . . . . and I . . . ."

And Pyetushkóff wept in torrents. Onísim

held him up from behind with all his might . . . first making a very wry face, then beginning to cry himself. . . . And Vasilísa wept also.

## XI

Ten years later, one could encounter on the streets of the town of O*** a thin man with a small, red nose, clad in an old green coat with a greasy velveteen collar. He occupied a tiny garret in the bake-shop with which we are acquainted. Praskóvya Ivánovna was no longer in the land of the living. Her niece, Vasilísa, managed the business, assisted by her husband, a red-haired, purblind petty burgher named Demofónt. The man in the green coat had one weakness: he was fond of getting drunk, but he behaved himself peaceably, nevertheless. My readers have, probably, recognised in him Iván Afanásievitch.

# THE TWO FRIENDS

(1853)

# THE TWO FRIENDS

IN the spring of 184.., Borís Andréitch Vyazovnín, a young man of six-and-twenty, arrived at his hereditary estate, situated in one of the Governments of the central zone of Russia. He had only just retired from the service,—"owing to family circumstances,"—and was intending to occupy himself with the management of his property. A happy thought, of course! Only Borís Andréitch conceived it, as is generally the case, against his own will. His revenues were diminishing year by year, his debts were increasing: he had become convinced of the impossibility of remaining in the service, of living in the capital,—in a word, of living as he had lived hitherto, and he had decided, most reluctantly, to devote several years to improving those "family circumstances," thanks to which he suddenly found himself in the rural wilds.

Vyazovnín found his estate in disorder, his manor neglected, the house almost falling to ruin; he changed his superintendent, and reduced the number of house-serfs; he cleaned out two or three rooms, and ordered new boards to be ap-

plied at points where the roof leaked; but he undertook no harsh measures, and did not plan any improvements, as the result of the, apparently, simple idea that one should first find out, at least, what he wants to improve. . . . So, then, he set to work to learn about farming, and began, as the saying is, by penetrating into the core of the matter. It must be admitted that he penetrated into the core of the matter without any special ardour, and without haste. Being unaccustomed to the country, he was terribly bored, and often could not imagine how and where he was to pass the whole long day. He had a good many neighbours, but he did not consort with them—not because he avoided them, but simply because he did not happen to come in contact with them. At last, when autumn had already come, he chanced to make the acquaintance of one of his nearest neighbours.

This neighbour's name was Piótr Vasílitch Krupítzyn. He had formerly served in the cavalry, and had retired with the rank of lieutenant. Between his peasants and Vyazovnín's peasants, from time immemorial, a controversy had raged over two and a half desyatínas of mowing-land. They not infrequently came to blows; the hayricks mysteriously travelled from place to place; various unpleasantnesses occurred; and, in all probability, this quarrel would have continued for many years more, had not Krupítzyn, on learning

indirectly of Borís Andréitch's pacific qualities, gone to him for a personal conference. The results of this conference were very agreeable. In the first place, the matter was settled forthwith and forever, to the mutual satisfaction of the property-owners; and, in the second place, they took a great liking to each other, began to see each other frequently, and by winter, they had already become so intimate that they were hardly ever separated.

And, nevertheless, they had very little in common. Vyazovnín as a man who, although not wealthy himself, was the son of wealthy parents, had received a good education, had studied at the university, knew various languages, was fond of occupying himself with the perusal of books, and, in general, might be regarded as a cultivated man. Krupítzyn, on the contrary, spoke French indifferently, never took a book in his hand without some special need, and belonged rather to the category of uneducated men. In external appearance also the friends bore but little resemblance to each other: Vyazovnín was quite tall of stature, slender, fair-haired, and looked like an Englishman, kept his person, particularly his hands, very clean, dressed elegantly, and wore dandified neckcloths . . . . habits of the capital! Krupítzyn, on the contrary, was short of stature, round-shouldered, swarthy, black-haired, and went about winter and summer in a sort of sack-

overcoat, with protruding pockets, made of cloth of a bronze hue.

"I like this colour,"—he was wont to say,—"because it does n't show spots."

That colour really did not soil easily, but the cloth itself was pretty well besprinkled with spots, nevertheless. Vyazovnín was fond of good eating, and liked to talk about how agreeable it was to have good food, and what it meant to have taste; Krupítzyn ate everything which was set before him, so long as he had something for his jaws to work upon. If it happened to be cabbage-soup with buckwheat groats, he ladled up the soup with pleasure, and devoured the buckwheat groats; if he was offered thin foreign soup, he applied himself with equal readiness to the soup, and if there happened to be any buckwheat groats on hand, he poured it into his plate,—and it was all right. He loved kvas, according to his own expression, "like his own father." French wines, which he called "sour stuff," he could not endure, especially claret. Altogether, Krupítzyn was very far from being fastidious, while Vyazovnín changed his pocket-handkerchief twice a day. In a word, the friends, as we have said above, did not resemble each other. One thing they had in common: they were both what is called "nice young fellows, simple lads." Krupítzyn had been born so, and Vyazovnín had become so. In addition to this, both of them were

distinguished by the fact that neither liked anything in particular,—that is to say, had no particular passion or predilection for anything. Krupítzyn was seven or eight years older than Vyazovnín.

Their days passed in a rather monotonous manner. As a rule, in the morning, but not too early, —about nine o'clock,—Borís Andréitch was already sitting at the window, in a handsome dressing-gown open on the breast, with his hair brushed, all washed, in a snow-white shirt, with a book and a cup of tea. The door opened, and Piótr Vasílitch entered in his customary untidy condition. His hamlet lay only half a verst from Vyázovna (that was the name of Borís Andréitch's estate). Moreover, Piótr Vasílitch frequently stayed over night with Borís Andréitch.

"Ah, good morning!"—they both said simultaneously.—"How did you sleep?"

And thereupon Fediúshka (an urchin of eleven years, garbed as a page, whose very hair, which stood on end even on the back of his head, like a sandpiper's feathers in springtime, had a sleepy air) brought Piótr Vasílitch his dressing-gown of Bukhará stuff, and Piótr Vasílitch, after a preliminary grunt, donned the dressing-gown, and began on his tea and his pipe. Then conversation began—leisurely conversation, with pauses and rests. They talked about the weather, about the preceding day, about field

labours and the price of grain; they also talked about the landed gentry of the vicinity, male and female. In the early days of his acquaintanceship with Borís Andréitch, Piótr Vasílitch had regarded it as his duty, and had even delighted in the chance, to interrogate his neighbour concerning the life of the capital, concerning science and culture in general,—and concerning lofty topics as a whole. Borís Andréitch's replies had interested him, frequently surprised him, and arrested his attention; but, at the same time, they had caused him some fatigue, so that all such conversations speedily came to an end; and Borís Andréitch himself, on his side, did not display any superfluous anxiety to renew them. Occasionally thereafter—and that at rare intervals—Piótr Vasílitch would suddenly ask Borís Andréitch, for instance, "what sort of a thing is the electrical telegraph?" and after listening to Borís Andréitch's not entirely lucid explanation, he would say, after a pause: "Yes, that 's wonderful!" and for a long time thereafter he would not inquire about any learned subject whatsoever. The conversations between them were mostly of the following nature. Piótr Vasílitch, for example, would collect the smoke from his pipe, and emitting it through his nostrils, would inquire:

"What 's that new girl you 've got? I saw her at the back door, Borís Andréitch?"

Borís Andréitch, in his turn, would raise his cigar to his mouth, take a couple of puffs, and after swallowing a sip of cold tea, would articulate:

"What new girl?"

Piótr Vasílitch would bend somewhat to one side, and staring through the window into the courtyard, where a dog had just bitten a bare-legged urchin on the calf, would reply:

"The very fair-haired one . . . quite pretty."

"Ah!"—Borís Andréitch would exclaim, after a brief pause:—"that 's my new laundress."

"Where does she come from?"—asks Piótr Vasílitch, as though surprised.

"From Moscow. She has been there for training."

And then both are silent for a while.

"And how many laundresses have you in all, Borís Andréitch?"—asks Piótr Vasílitch, staring attentively at the tobacco which is flashing with a crisp, crackling noise under the hot ashes in his pipe.

"Three,"—replies Borís Andréitch.

"Three! I have only one. And that one has hardly anything to do. You know yourself, I think, how much washing I have!"

"H'm!"—replies Borís Andréitch.

And the conversation ceases for a time.

In these pursuits the morning passed, and breakfast-time arrived; Piótr Vasílitch was par-

ticularly fond of his breakfast, and insisted that twelve o'clock is the very hour when a man feels hungry; and, in fact, at that hour, he ate so cheerily, with such healthy and agreeable appetite, that even a German would have rejoiced at the sight of him: so glorious a breakfast did Piótr Vasílitch make! Borís Andréitch ate much less; he was satisfied with a chicken cutlet, or a couple of soft-boiled eggs with butter and some English sauce in an artfully constructed and patented vessel, for which he had paid a heavy price, and which he privately considered disgusting, although he asserted that he could not eat a single morsel without it. After breakfast the two friends made the round of the farm, if the weather was good, or simply took a stroll, and looked to see how the young horses were coming on with their training, and so forth. Sometimes they went as far as Piótr Vasílitch's hamlet, and once in a while, they dropped into his little house.

This little house, tiny and rickety, bore more resemblance to the plain hovel of a house-serf than to the homestead of a landed proprietor. On the straw thatch, riddled all the way around with the nests of swallows and daws, grew green moss; of the two buildings constructed of aspen logs, formerly fitted together, one had fallen backward, and the other was nodding sideways, and had sunk into the ground: in a word, Piótr Vasí-

litch's house was wretched both outside and in. But Piótr Vasílitch did not fall into despondency: being a bachelor, and in general not an exacting man, he took little heed of the comforts of life, and contented himself with the fact that he had a place where he could take refuge, in case of need, from stormy weather and cold. His housekeeper, Makedóniya, a woman of middle age, very zealous and even honest, but unlucky, looked after his household: but nothing succeeded with her; the crockery got smashed, the linen got torn, the food was under-cooked or over-cooked. Piótr Vasílitch called her Caligula.

Being possessed of an innate inclination for hospitality, Piótr Vasílitch was fond of seeing guests at his house, and of entertaining them, notwithstanding the scantiness of his means. He made special efforts, and bustled more than usual when Borís Andréitch visited him; but, thanks to Makedóniya, who, moreover, nearly flew off her feet at every step with zeal, poor Piótr Vasílitch's entertainments always turned out extremely ill-starred, and were chiefly confined to a morsel of the raw-dried back of sturgeon, hardened with age, and a glass of vodka, concerning which he expressed himself with entire justice when he said that it was capital *against* the stomach. After a stroll, the two friends were wont to return to Borís Andréitch's house and dine in leisurely fashion. After having eaten as heartily

as though he had had no breakfast, Piótr Vasílitch would take himself off to some solitary nook and sleep two or three hours; Borís Andréitch, during that interval, read the foreign newspapers. In the evening, the two friends met together again: such friendship had sprung up between them! Sometimes they sat down to play at preference, just the two by themselves; sometimes they simply chatted in the same manner as in the morning; and it sometimes happened that Piótr Vasílitch would take his guitar from the wall, and sing various romances in a fairly agreeable tenor voice. Piótr Vasílitch was much fonder of music than was Borís Andréitch, who could not utter the name of Beethoven without enthusiasm, and who was perpetually making ready to order a piano from Moscow. In moments of sadness or dejection, Piótr Vasílitch had a habit of singing a romance which dated from the days of his service with his regiment. . . . With particular feeling, and somewhat through his nose, he would warble the following lines:

"No Frenchman runs our kitchen,
But an orderly cooks our dinner. . . .
The splendid Rode does not act,
Catalani does not sing. . . .
The trumpeter deftly sounds tattoo,
The quartermaster will come with his report."

Borís Andréitch now and then chimed in, but his voice was disagreeable and not true to pitch. About ten o'clock, and sometimes earlier, the friends separated . . . . and on the following day, the same thing began all over again.

So then, one day, as Piótr Vasílitch was sitting, according to his wont, opposite Borís Andréitch, in a somewhat oblique line, he stared at him with a good deal of intentness, and said in a thoughtful voice:

"I 'm surprised at one thing, Borís Andréitch. . . ."

"What 's that?"—asked the latter.

"This. You are a young man, clever, cultured: what possesses you to live in the country?"

Borís Andréitch gazed in astonishment at his neighbour.

"Surely you are aware, Piótr Vasílitch,"—he said at last,—"that if it were not for my circumstances. . . . Circumstances compel me, Piótr Vasílitch."

"Circumstances? Your circumstances don't count, so far. . . . With your estate you can exist. Get a position in the service."

And after a brief pause, Piótr Vasílitch added:

"If I were in your place, I would enter the uhlans."

"The uhlans? Why the uhlans in particular?"

"Because it seems to me it would be more fitting for you in the uhlans."

"But excuse me, you yourself served in the hussars, did you not?"

"I? Of course I did,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch with animation,—"and in what a regiment! You 'll not find another such regiment in all the world! 'T was a regiment of gold! The commanding officers, my comrades—what men they were! But you . . . I don't know why . . . but it seems to me that you ought to enter the uhlans. You are fair of complexion, and you have a slender figure: it all fits in."

"But excuse me, Piótr Vasílitch, you forget that, by virtue of the military regulations, I should have to begin with the rank of yunker. At my age that is somewhat embarrassing. I believe it is even prohibited."

"That 's a fact,"—remarked Piótr Vasílitch, and dropped his eyes.—"Well, then, in that case, get married," he suddenly ejaculated, raising his head.

"Why, what a queer turn of thought you have to-day, Piótr Vasílitch!" exclaimed Borís Andréitch.

"Why is it queer? What 's the use, in fact, of living on like this? What are you waiting for? You 're only wasting time. I want to know what profit you will derive from not marrying?"

"But profit is not the point,"—began Borís Andréitch.

"No, permit me,"—Piótr Vasílitch interrupted him, unexpectedly flying into a passion.—"It 's amazing to me how afraid the young men of the present day are of marriage! I simply cannot understand it. You must n't mind my not being married, Borís Andréitch. Perhaps I have wished it, and have proposed it, and that 's what they did to me."

And here Piótr Vasílitch elevated the forefinger of his right hand, with its exterior turned toward Borís Andréitch.

"And with your property, how can you help marrying?"

Borís Andréitch gazed attentively at Piótr Vasílitch.

"Is it a cheerful matter, pray, to lead a bachelor life?"—went on Piótr Vasílitch.—"Eká, what a marvel! here 's mirth for you! . . . Really, the young men of the present day amaze me."

And Piótr Vasílitch with irritation knocked the ashes out of his Turkish pipe on the arm of his chair, and blew into the tchubúk.

"But who told you, Piótr Vasílitch, that I do not intend to marry?" said Borís Andréitch, slowly.

Piótr Vasílitch stopped short, motionless, just as he was, with his fingers thrust into his

tobacco-pouch of dark-red velvet embroidered with spangles. Borís Andréitch's words surprised him.

"Yes,"—went on Borís Andréitch:—"I am ready to marry. Find me a bride, and I will marry."

"Truly?"

"Truly."

"No, by God?"

"What ails you, Piótr Vasílitch? By God, I 'm not jesting."

Piótr Vasílitch filled his pipe.

"Well, look out for yourself, Borís Andréitch. You shall have a bride."

"Very good,"—returned Borís Andréitch:—"but hearken to me—why, in reality, do you wish to get me married?"

"Why, because, as I look at you, you have no capacity for doing nothing."

Borís Andréitch smiled.

"On the contrary, up to this moment it has struck me that I am a master-hand at that."

"You don't understand me rightly,"—said Piótr Vasílitch, and changed the conversation.

Two days later, Piótr Vasílitch presented himself before his neighbour, not in his habitual paletot-sack, but in a frock-coat, black as the raven's wing, with a high waist, tiny buttons and long sleeves. Piótr Vasílitch's moustache looked almost black with dye, and his hair, tightly curled

in front, in the shape of two long sausages, glistened brightly with pomade. A big velvet stock with a satin band tightly compressed Piótr Vasílitch's throat and imparted a solemn immobility and a festive mien to the entire upper portion of his body.

"What is the meaning of this toilet?"—inquired Borís Andréitch.

"The meaning of this toilet,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch, sinking into an arm-chair, but not with his customary free-and-easy manner,—"is that you are to order the calash to be harnessed up. We are going for a drive."

"Whither?"

"To the bride."

"To what bride?"

"Why, have you forgotten already what you and I were talking about three days ago?"

Borís Andréitch burst out laughing, but in his soul he was disconcerted.

"Good gracious! Piótr Vasílitch,—why, that was only a joke."

"A joke? Did n't you swear at the time that you were not jesting? No, excuse me, Borís Andréitch, but you must keep your word. I have already taken the proper measures."

Borís Andréitch was more disconcerted than ever.

"But what measures are you referring to?" he asked.

"Oh, don't you worry. . . . What do you think! I have only warned one of our lady neighbours, a most charming person, that you and I intend to call upon her to-day."

"What neighbour is that?"

"Wait, and you will find out. Here, now, first dress yourself, and order the horses to be harnessed."

Borís Andréitch cast an irresolute glance around him.

"Really, Piótr Vasílitch, I don't know what possesses you . . . . just see what the weather is like."

"Never mind the weather; it 's always like that."

"And have we far to go?"

"Fifteen versts."

Borís Andréitch said nothing for a while.

"But we might breakfast first, at least!"

"Breakfast is all right—we can do that. Do you know what, Borís Andréitch: go and dress yourself now, and I 'll give all the necessary orders without you; a little vodka, a bit of dried sturgeon—that does not take long, and they 'll feed us at our little widow's—there 's no need of worrying about that."

"Is she a widow?"—asked Borís Andréitch, who was already at the door of his study, turning round.

Piótr Vasílitch wagged his head.

" You shall see, you shall see."

Borís Andréitch left the room and locked the door behind him, while Piótr Vasílitch, when he was left alone, gave orders concerning both the calash and the breakfast.

Borís Andréitch took a pretty long time to dress. Piótr Vasílitch was already draining his second glass of vodka, with a slight frown and a melancholy expression, when Borís Andréitch made his appearance on the threshold of his study. He had taken great pains with his toilet. He wore a foppishly-cut capacious black coat, whose dull mass contrasted agreeably with the dull gleam of his light-grey trousers, a low black stock, and a handsome, dark-blue waistcoat; a gold chain, fastened by a hook through the lowest buttonhole, lost itself modestly in a side pocket; his thin boots squeaked aristocratically, and along with the appearance of Borís Andréitch, the odour of ess-bouquet mingled with the odour of fresh linen was disseminated in the air. All that Piótr Vasílitch could do was to ejaculate " Ah! "—and immediately seize his cap.

Borís Andréitch drew on his left hand a grey glacé-kid glove, having preliminarily blown into it; then with the same hand he nervously poured himself out a quarter of a glass of vodka, and drank it; finally, he took his hat, and went out with Piótr Vasílitch into the anteroom.

"I 'm only doing this for you,"—said Borís Andréitch, as he took his seat in the calash.

"Let us assume that it is for me,"—said Piótr Vasílitch, on whom Borís Andréitch's elegant appearance was, obviously, taking effect;—"but perhaps you will thank me for yourself."

And he told the coachman how and where to drive. The calash rolled off.

"We are going to Sófya Kiríllovna Zadnyéprovsky,"—remarked Piótr Vasílitch, after a decidedly prolonged interval, during the course of which both friends had been sitting as motionless as though they were made of stone.—"Have you heard about her?"

"I think I have,"—replied Borís Andréitch.—"And are you reserving her for my bride, pray?"

"And why should n't I? She is a woman of excellent mind, with means, with manners which may be called the manners of the capital. However, you can inspect her . . . . that does not bind you to anything."

"I should think not!"—returned Borís Andréitch.—"And how old is she?"

"Twenty-five or twenty-eight—not more than that. In her very prime, as the saying is!"

It was not fifteen, but a good five-and-twenty versts to Madame Zadnyéprovsky's, so that Borís Andréitch got very thoroughly chilled toward the end, and kept hiding his reddened nose in the

beaver collar of his cloak. Piótr Vasílitch was not afraid of the cold, in general—and, in particular, when he was dressed in festive attire. Then he was, rather, subject to perspiration. Madame Zadnyéprovsky's manor consisted of a small, new, white house, with a green roof, in the style of a suburban villa, in city taste, with a small garden and courtyard. Such villas are frequently to be met with in the environs of Moscow; in the provinces they are more rarely encountered. It was evident that Madame Zadnyéprovsky had not been settled there long. The friends alighted from the calash. On the porch they were received by a footman in yellowish-grey trousers and a round grey frock-coat, the buttons stamped with a coat of arms; in the anteroom, which was quite tidy, but with a locker-bench, another footman of the same sort met them. Piótr Vasílitch ordered the man to announce him and Borís Andréitch. The lackey did not go to his mistress, but replied that he had orders to show them in.

The guests put themselves to rights, and passing through the dining-room, in which a canary-bird was trilling in a deafening manner, they entered the drawing-room, filled with fashionable furniture from a Russian shop, very artful and contorted in shape, under the pretext of insuring the comfort of the persons who should sit upon it, but in reality extremely uncomfortable. Two minutes had not elapsed before the rustle of a

silken gown became audible in the adjoining room; the portière was lifted, and the mistress of the house entered the drawing-room with brisk steps. Piótr Vasílitch bowed and scraped and led Borís Andréitch up to her.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, and have long wished to do so,"—said the hostess easily, as she swept a swift glance over him from head to foot;—"I am very grateful to Piótr Vasílitch for procuring me so agreeable an acquaintance. I beg that you will be seated."

And the hostess seated herself, rustling her gown as she did so, on a low couch, leaned against the back, stretched out her feet, shod in very pretty little boots, and crossed her hands. Her gown was of green glacé silk, with whitish reflections, and had several rows of flounces.

Borís Andréitch seated himself in an arm-chair opposite her; Piótr Vasílitch a little farther away. Conversation began. Borís Andréitch inspected Sófya Kiríllovna with attention. She was a tall, well-built woman, with a slender waist, a dark skin, and quite handsome. The expression of her face, and especially of her eyes, which were large and brilliant, with up-lifted corners, such as the Chinese have, evinced a strange mixture of daring and timidity, and could not possibly be designated as natural. She would narrow her eyes, then suddenly open them very wide; and on her lips there constantly hovered

a smile, which was intended to appear indifferent. All Sófya Kiríllovna's movements were very free, almost abrupt. Nevertheless, her appearance pleased Borís Andréitch; the only thing which affected him unpleasantly was that her hair was parted on one side, which gave to her features a bold, boyish aspect; moreover, she expressed herself too purely and regularly in Russian, in his opinion. . . . Borís Andréitch shared the view of Púshkin, that—

> As rosy lips without a smile,
> So without grammatical errors—

it is impossible to love the Russian language. In a word, Sófya Kiríllovna belonged to the category of women who are called by their admirers "clever ladies," by their husbands "pugnacious persons," and by old bachelors "sprightly females."

The conversation turned first on the tedium of country life.

"There simply is n't a living soul here, simply not a single person with whom to exchange a word,"—said Sófya Kiríllovna, pronouncing the letter *s* with particular distinctness.—"I cannot understand what sort of people it is who live here. And those,"—she added with a grimace, —"with whom one would find acquaintance agreeable, don't come to us; they leave us, poor wretches, in our cheerless solitude."

Borís Andréitch bent forward slightly, and muttered some awkward excuse, while Piótr Vasílitch merely darted a glance at him, as though desirous of saying: "Well, what did I tell you? I don't think the lady stands on ceremony as to her words."

"Do you smoke?"—asked Sófya Kiríllovna.

"Yes . . . . but . . . ."

"Pray, smoke . . . I do it myself."

And so saying, the widow took from the table a fairly large cigar-case, drew from it a cigarette, and offered it to her visitors. Each visitor took a cigarette. Sófya Kiríllovna rang and ordered a small boy with a red waistcoat which covered his entire breast, who entered, to bring a light. The urchin brought a wax taper in a crystal candle-stick. The cigarettes began to emit smoke.

"Here, now, for instance, you would n't believe it,"—pursued the widow, throwing her head back a little, and emitting smoke in a slender stream upward:—"there are people here who think that ladies ought not to smoke. And as for riding on horseback, God forbid! they would simply stone them to death.—Yes,"—she added, after a brief pause,—"everything which stands out above the ordinary level, everything which breaks the law of some fictitious propriety, is subjected here to the severest condemnation."

"The ladies are particularly shrewish in that line,"—remarked Piótr Vasílitch.

"Yes,"—responded the widow.—"'T is a calamity for them to get their tongues loosed on you! However, I have nothing whatever to do with them; their gossip does not penetrate into my desert asylum."

"And are you not bored?"—asked Borís Andréitch.

"Bored? No. I read. . . . And when I get tired of books, I meditate; I divine the future, I put questions to my Fate."

"Do you really tell fortunes?"—asked Piótr Vasílitch.

The widow smiled indulgently.

"And why should n't I tell fortunes? I 'm already old enough for that."

"Oh, why do you say that?"—retorted Piótr Vasílitch.

Sófya Kiríllovna gazed at him with her eyes narrowed.

"But let us drop this conversation,"—said she, and turned to Borís Andréitch with vivacity:—"listen, Monsieur Vyazovnín, I am convinced that you are interested in Russian literature."

"Yes . . . . of course, I . . . ."

Vyazovnín was fond of reading, but he read little, and that reluctantly, in Russian. Recent literature, in particular, was unknown to him: he had stopped at Púshkin.

"Tell me, please, why Márlinsky has become so unpopular of late? In my opinion, that is in

the highest degree unjust. What is your opinion of him?"

"Márlinsky is a writer of merit, of course," —replied Borís Andréitch.

"He is a poet; he carries the imagination into a world . . . . into such an enchanting, wonderful world; but nowadays people have begun to describe everyday things. Well, good gracious, what is there good about everyday life here on earth. . . ."

And Sófya Kiríllovna described a circle about her with her hand.

Borís Andréitch looked significantly at Sófya Kiríllovna.

"I do not agree with you. I think there is a great deal of good here,"—he said, laying special emphasis on the last word.

Sófya Kiríllovna suddenly burst out into a harsh sort of laugh, while Piótr Vasílitch as suddenly raised his head, reflected, and set to smoking again. The conversation continued in the same way in which it had begun until dinner-time, skipping incessantly from one subject to another, which does not happen when a conversation becomes really interesting. Among other things, it turned on marriage, on its advantages and disadvantages, and on the position of woman in general. Sófya Kiríllovna stood up strongly against marriage, got excited at last, and feeling conscious of ardour, expressed herself very

eloquently, although her interlocutors hardly contradicted her at all: not without cause did she love Márlinsky. She was also able to resort to ornamentation of the newest style. The words: "artistic," "picturesque," "dependent on," fairly poured from her mouth.

"What can be more precious to a woman than freedom—freedom of thought, of feeling, of action!" she exclaimed at last.

"But permit me,"—Piótr Vasílitch interrupted her; his face had begun to assume a dissatisfied expression;—"what does a woman want with freedom? What will she do with it?"

"What do you mean by 'what'? And is it necessary to man, according to your ideas? That 's it exactly; you, gentlemen . . . ."

"But it is n't necessary to man,"—Piótr Vasílitch interrupted her again.

"What,—it is n't necessary?"

"Yes, precisely that, it is n't necessary. What does a man want of that lauded freedom? When a man is free 't is a well-known fact that he either is bored or he makes a fool of himself."

"Consequently,"—remarked Sófya Kiríllovna, with an ironical smile:—"you are bored; therefore, knowing you to be a sensible man, I cannot assume that you have made a fool of yourself, as you put it."

"Both things happen,"—said Piótr Vasílitch, calmly.

"That 's charming! However, I ought to be grateful to your boredom for giving me the pleasure of seeing you at my house to-day. . . ."

And, pleased with the rather clever turn of her phrase, the hostess threw herself back and articulated in an undertone:

"I perceive that your friend is fond of paradoxes, Mr. Vyazovnín."

"I have not observed it,"—replied Borís Andréitch.

"What is it that I am fond of?"—inquired Piótr Vasílitch.

"Paradoxes."

Piótr Vasílitch looked Sófya Kiríllovna straight in the eye, and made her no reply, but merely thought to himself: "I know what thou art fond of. . . ."

The little boy with the red waistcoat entered and announced that dinner was served.

"Do me the favour,"—said the hostess, rising from the divan.

And they all went into the dining-room.

The guests did not like the dinner. Piótr Vasílitch rose from the table hungry, although there were a great many viands; and Borís Andréitch, as a judge of good eating, was displeased, although the food was served under pewter covers, and the individual plates were served hot. The wine, also, turned out to be bad, in spite of the magnificent labels, adorned with gold and silver,

on the bottles. Sófya Kiríllovna did not cease talking,—only from time to time she darted expressive looks at the servants, and she drank a considerable amount of wine, remarking as she did so, that in England all the ladies take wine, but here it is considered indecorous. After dinner, the hostess invited Borís Andréitch and Piótr Vasílitch to return to the drawing-room, and inquired of them which they preferred—coffee or yellow tea. Borís Andréitch asked for tea, and when he had drained his cup, regretted that he had not taken coffee; while Piótr Vasílitch asked for coffee, and when he had drained his cup, he asked for tea, and having tasted it, he set the cup back on the tray. The hostess seated herself, lighted a cigarette, and evidently was not averse to entering upon the most vivacious conversation; her eyes were blazing, and her swarthy cheeks glowed scarlet. But the guests made languid answers to her bold speeches, occupied themselves chiefly with smoking, and, judging from their glances, which suddenly became riveted on the corners of the room, were thinking of taking their departure. However, Borís Andréitch would, in all probability, have consented to remain until evening; he was already on the point of entering into a debate with Sófya Kiríllovna in answer to her coquettish question: "Was not he surprised at her living alone, without a female companion?" but Piótr Vasílitch was plainly in haste to

go home. He rose, went out into the anteroom, and ordered the horses to be put to. When, at last, the two friends began to take their leave, and the hostess began to try to detain them, and amiably to expostulate with them for having stayed so short a time with her, Borís Andréitch, with an irresolute inclination of his body, and a smirking expression on his face, showed that, at all events, her reproaches were taking effect on him; but Piótr Vasílitch, on the contrary, kept muttering: "Absolutely impossible, ma'am; 't is high time we were going, ma'am—business, ma'am—'t is moonlight now,"—and backed obstinately toward the door. Sófya Kiríllovna made them promise, however, that they would visit her again in a few days, and offered them her hand, in English fashion. Borís Andréitch alone accepted her offer, and squeezed her fingers fairly tight. She screwed up her eyes, and smiled. At that moment, Piótr Vasílitch was already thrusting his arms into his coat-sleeves in the anteroom.

Before the calash had got clear of the village, he was the first to break the silence, with the exclamation:

"She is n't the thing, she is n't the thing—she won't do, she is n't the right thing!"

"What are you trying to say?"—Borís Andréitch asked him.

"She is n't the thing, she is n't the thing,"

—repeated Piótr Vasílitch, averting his eyes, and turning slightly away.

"If you are saying that about Sófya Kiríllovna, I don't agree with you; she is a very charming lady,—with affectations, but charming."

"I should think so! Of course, if only in order, for instance. . . But with what object did I wish to make you acquainted with her, pray?"

Borís Andréitch did not answer.

"I tell you again, she is n't the thing! I see that myself. I like that—the way she speaks of herself: 'I 'm an epicurean.' Excuse me; two of my teeth are missing on the right side—but do I talk about that? Everybody can see it without any words of mine. And, moreover, what sort of a house-wife is she? She has nearly starved us to death. No, in my opinion, be free and easy, be well-read, if the fancy strikes you, be stylish, only be a good house-wife first of all. No, she is n't the thing; she won't do; that 's not the sort of thing you need. You are not to be dazzled with red waistcoats or covers to the dishes."

"But do you find it necessary that I should be dazzled?"—inquired Borís Andréitch.

"I know well what you need,—I know now."

"I assure you, that I am indebted to you for introducing me to Sófya Kiríllovna."

" So much the better; but she won't do, I repeat it."

It was late when the friends reached home. As Piótr Vasílitch parted from Borís Andréitch, he took his hand and said:

" All the same, I won't leave you in peace. I won't give you back your promise."

" Goodness, I am at your service,"—replied Borís Andréitch.

" Well, that 's fine."

And Piótr Vasílitch went his way.

A whole week passed again in the usual routine, with this peculiarity, however, that Piótr Vasílitch absented himself somewhere or other for an entire day. At last, one morning he made his appearance dressed in festal array, and again invited Borís Andréitch to drive with him to make a call. Borís Andréitch, who evidently had been expecting this invitation with a certain amount of impatience, submitted without resistance.

"'Whither are you taking me this time?"—he asked Piótr Vasílitch, as he seated himself beside him in the sledge.

Winter had had time to close in since their drive to Sófya Kiríllovna.

" I am taking you now, Borís Andréitch,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch, with pauses between his words,—" to a very honourable house—to the Tikhodúeffs'. It is a highly respected family. The old man served as colonel, and is a very fine

fellow. His wife is a very fine woman. They have two daughters, extremely amiable beings, capitally brought up, and they are wealthy. I don't know which of them you will like best; one of them is vivacious, the other quiet; the second is altogether too shy, I must admit. But both can stand up for themselves. You will see!"

"Good, I shall see,"—replied Borís Andréitch, and thought to himself: "Exactly like the Lárin family in Onyégin."[1]

And whether it was owing to this recollection, or to some other cause, his features assumed for a time a disillusioned and bored aspect.

"What is the father's name?"—he asked carelessly.

"Kalimón Ivánitch,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch.

"Kalimón! What a name! . . . And the mother?"

"The mother's name is Pelagéya Ivánovna."

"And what are the daughters called?"

"One is Pelagéya also, and the other is Emeréntziya."

"Emeréntziya? I never heard such a name in my life. . . . And Kalimónovna into the bargain."

"Yes, it really is a rather strange name. . . . But what a girl she is! simply, one may say, all constituted of some sort of virtuous fire!"

[1] Púshkin's famous poem, "Evgény Onyégin."—Translator.

"Good gracious, Piótr Vasílitch, how poetically you express yourself! And which is Emeréntziya—the quieter of the two?"

"No, the other. . . . But you shall see for yourself."

"Emeréntziya Kalimónovna!" exclaimed Vyazovnín again.

"Her mother calls her Emérance,"—remarked Piótr Vasílitch, in a low voice.

"And her husband—*Calimon?*"

"I have n't heard her do that. But just wait."

"I will."

It was about twenty-five versts to the Tikhodúeffs', as it was to Sófya Kiríllovna's; but their old-fashioned manor did not in the least resemble the dandified little house of the free and easy widow. It was a clumsy structure, commodious and vast, a sort of mass of dark-hued planks, with dark glass in the windows. By its sides, in two rows, stood lofty birch-trees; the dark-brown crests of huge lindens were visible over the roof—the whole house seemed to be overgrown on all sides; in summer, this vegetation probably enlivened the aspect of the manor, but in winter it imparted to it a still greater air of melancholy. Neither could the impression produced by the interior of the house be called cheerful: everything in it was gloomy and dim, everything seemed older than it really was.

The friends told the servant to announce them;

they were shown into the drawing-room. The master and mistress of the house rose to welcome them, but for a long time could greet them only with signs and movements of the body, to which the guests, on their part, replied merely with smiles and bows: such a frightful barking was set up by four white lap-dogs which, at the appearance of strange faces, leaped from the embroidered cushions, whereon they had been lying. The enraged little dogs were reduced to a degree of silence by the waving of handkerchiefs in the air, and by other means; but one of them, the oldest and the most vicious, had to be dragged from under a bench, and carried off into the bedroom by a maid, who, during the operation, was bitten in the right hand.

Piótr Vasílitch took advantage of the restored silence and introduced Borís Andréitch to the host and hostess. They declared, with one voice, that they were very glad to see the new acquaintance; then Kalimón Iványitch presented Borís Andréitch to his daughters, calling them Pólinka and Éminka. There were in the drawing-room two other persons of the female sex, who were no longer young; one in a mob-cap, the other with a dark kerchief on her head. But Kalimón Iványitch did not consider it necessary to introduce Borís Andréitch to them.

Kalimón Iványitch was a man of fifty-five, tall, stout, grey-haired; his face had no expression

in particular; the features were heavy, plain, with an imprint of indifference, good-nature, and indolence. His wife, a tiny, thin woman, with a worn little face, and a false front of reddish hair under a tall cap, seemed to be in a perennial flutter; traces of a long-vanished affectation were perceptible in her.

Of the daughters, one, Pelagéya, black-haired and swarthy of skin, cast side-long glances and was shy; the other, Emeréntziya, on the contrary, fair-haired, and plump, with round, rosy cheeks, a small pursed-up mouth, a small snub nose, and sweet eyes, stood forth prominently; it was evident that the duty of entertaining guests rested upon her, and did not in the least incommode her. Both sisters wore white gowns, with blue ribbons which fluttered at the slightest movement. Blue was becoming to Emeréntziya, but not to Pólinka . . . and, indeed, it would have been difficult to find anything which was becoming to her, although she could not have been called a homely girl.

The visitors seated themselves; the host and hostess propounded to them the customary questions, uttered with that stiff and mawkish expression of countenance which makes its appearance with the most well-bred people during the first moments of conversation with new acquaintances; the guests expressed themselves in the same manner. All this produced a rather oppressive im-

pression. Kalimón Ivánitch, not being very fertile in expedients by nature, asked Borís Andréitch: "was it long since he had come to live in their parts?" while Borís Andréitch had only just finished replying to the self-same question, put by Pelagéya Ivánovna. Pelagéya Ivánovna, in a very tender voice,—the voice which is always used before visitors on the day of their first call, —reproached her husband with being absent-minded; Kalimón Ivánitch was somewhat disconcerted, and blew his nose noisily into a checked handkerchief. This sound excited one of the lap-dogs, and it began to bark; but Emerén-tziya with ready wit immediately petted the dog and soothed it. This same young girl managed to render still another service to her parents, who were still somewhat bewildered: she enlivened the conversation by taking her seat modestly but firmly by the side of Borís Andréitch, and, in her turn, propounding to him, with the most impressive manner, questions which, although insignificant, were agreeable, and calculated to evoke mirthful replies. Matters were soon proceeding as they should; a general debate arose, in which Pólinka alone took no part. She stared obstinately at the floor, while Emeréntziya was even laughing, gracefully raising one hand, and at the same time bearing herself as though she would have liked to say: "Look, look, how well-bred and amiable I am, and how much charming

playfulness and good will to all men there is about me!" It seemed as though her lisp also proceeded from the fact that she was so very good-natured. She laughed, protracting her laughter in a delightful manner, although Borís Andréitch, in the beginning, had not uttered any particularly-amusing remark; then she laughed all the more when Borís Andréitch, stimulated by the success of his words, really did begin to be witty and say malicious things. . . . Piótr Vasílitch laughed also. Vyazovnín remarked, among other things, that he was passionately fond of music.

"But how I do love music, why, it 's simply frightful!"—exclaimed Emeréntziya.

"You not only love it—you are a superb musician yourself,"—remarked Piótr Vasílitch.

"Really?"—asked Borís Andréitch.

"Yes,"—continued Piótr Vasílitch:—"and Emeréntziya Kalimónovna and Pelagéya Kalimónovna both sing and play splendidly on the piano, especially Emeréntziya Kalimónovna."

On hearing her name, Pólinka flushed and almost sprang out of her chair, while Emeréntziya modestly dropped her eyes.

"Akh, mesdemoiselles,"—began Borís Andréitch:—"will not you be so kind . . . . will not you do me the favour . . . ."

"I really . . . . don't know. . . ."—lisped

Emeréntziya—and, darting a stealthy glance at Piótr Vasílitch, she added reproachfully:—"Akh, what a man you are!"

But Piótr Vasílitch, being a resolute man, immediately addressed himself to the hostess.

"Pelagéya Ivánovna,"—said he,—"command your daughters to play us something, or to sing."

"I don't know whether they are in good voice to-day,"—replied Pelagéya Ivánovna;—"but they can try."

"Yes, try, do try,"—said their father.

"Akh, *maman,* how can we . . . ."

"*Emérance, quand je vous dis* . . ." said Pelagéya Ivánovna in a low tone, but very seriously.

She had a habit, common to many mothers, of issuing orders, or making hortatory comments to her children, in the presence of other people, in the French language, although those other people understood French also. And this was all the more strange, seeing that she herself did not know that language well, and pronounced it badly.

Emeréntziya rose.

"What shall we sing, *maman?*"—she asked submissively.

"Your duet; it 's very pretty.—My daughters," added Pelagéya Ivánovna, turning to Borís Andréitch,—"have different voices: Emeréntziya has a treble . . . ."

"Soprano, you mean to say?"

"Yes, yes, soprano. And Pólinka has a contralto."

"Ah! a contralto! that 's very pleasant."

"I can't sing to-day,"—said Pólinka, with an effort;—"I am hoarse."

Her voice really resembled a basso more than a contralto.

"Ah! well, in that case, Emérance, sing us thine aria; thou knowest which—the Italian one, thy favourite; and Pólinka will play thine accompaniment."

"The aria where thou patterest, patterest like a shower of peas,"—chimed in her father.

"The one with the bravura,"—explained her mother.

The two girls went to the piano. Pólinka raised the lid, placed the book of manuscript music on the rack, and took her seat, while Emeréntziya stood beside her, bridling almost perceptibly, but very charmingly, beneath the intently riveted glances of Borís Andréitch and Piótr Vasílitch, and occasionally lifting her handkerchief to her lips. At last she began to sing, after the fashion of most young ladies, shrilly and not without howling. She pronounced the words unintelligibly, but from certain nasal sounds it could be divined that she was singing in Italian. Toward the end, she really did patter like peas, to the great satisfaction of Kalimón

Iványitch,—he rose slightly in his chair and exclaimed:—"Well done!"—but she started the final trill sooner than she should have, so that her sister had to play several bars alone. This did not prevent Borís Andréitch, however, from expressing his pleasure, and paying compliments to Emeréntziya; and Piótr Vasílitch, after repeating a couple of times: "Very, very fine," added: "Won't you sing us something Russian now, 'The Nightingale,' or 'The Sarafán,'[1] or some gipsy song? For, to tell the truth, those foreign pieces are not written for such as we."

"I agree with you there,"—remarked Kalimón Iványitch.

"*Chanter . . . 'le Sarafan,'*"—remarked the mother, with the same sternness as before.

"No, not 'The Sarafán,'"—interposed Kalimón Iványitch:—"but 'We are two Gipsies,' or 'Doff thy cap and bow full low'—knowest thou?"

"Papa, you are always so queer!"—replied Emeréntziya, and sang "Doff thy cap," and sang it fairly well. Kalimón Iványitch hummed an accompaniment, and beat time with his foot, while Piótr Vasílitch went into perfect raptures.

"That 's quite another thing! That 's in our style!"—he kept repeating.—"You have

[1] The popular song, "The Red Sarafán"—the sarafán being the full, loose gown of unmarried peasant-girls, gathered into a band under the arms, and suspended over the shoulders by straps.—TRANSLATOR.

comforted us, Emeréntziya Kalimónovna! . . . . Now I see that you had a right to call yourself a lover of music and proficient in it! I agree; you are fond of it and proficient!"

"Akh, how indiscreet you are!"—retorted Emeréntziya, and was on the point of returning to her seat.

"*Á présent 'le Sarafan,'*"—said her mother.

Emeréntziya sang "The Sarafán," not so well as "Doff thy cap," but well, nevertheless.

"Now you ought to play us your sonata for four hands,"—remarked Pelagéya Ivánovna;—"but it will be better to defer that to another time, for I fear that we shall bore Mr. Vyazovnín."

"Pray, don't mention such a thing . . . ." began Borís Andréitch.

But Pólinka immediately clapped to the lid of the piano, and Emeréntziya announced that she was tired. Borís Andréitch felt it incumbent on him to repeat his compliments.

"Akh, Mr. Vyazovnín,"—she replied,—"you must have heard far better singers, I 'm sure; I can imagine what my singing sounds like after them. . . . Bomerius, it is true, said to me when he passed through here . . . . I think you must have heard of Bomerius, have you not?"

"No; who is that Bomerius?"

"Akh, good heavens! a splendid violinist, educated in the Paris Conservatory, a wonderful

musician. . . . He said to me, 'Mademoiselle, with your voice, if you would only study under a good teacher, the result would be simply marvellous.' He simply kissed all my fingers, one after the other. . . . But where am I to study here?"

And Emeréntziya heaved a sigh.

"Yes, of course . . . ." replied Borís Andréitch, politely;—"but with your talent . . ." He hesitated, and turned his eyes aside, with still greater politeness.

*"Emérance, demande pourquoi que le dîner . . ."* said Pelagéya Ivánovna.

*"Oui, maman,"*—replied Emeréntziya, and left the room, giving a pretty little skip in front of the door.

She would not have skipped had there not been visitors. And Borís Andréitch walked over to Pólinka.

"If this is the Lárin family,"—he thought,—"must not she be Tatyána?"

And he stepped up to Pólinka, who was watching his movements not without apprehension.

"You played your sister's accompaniments charmingly,"—he began;—"charmingly!"

Pólinka made no reply, but merely blushed to her very ears.

"I am very sorry that I did not succeed in hearing your duet. . . . From what opera is it?"

Pólinka's eyes roved uneasily.

Vyazovnín waited for her answer; no answer came.

"What sort of music do you like best?"—he asked, after waiting a while;—"Italian or German?"

Pólinka dropped her eyes.

"*Pélagie, réponde-donc,*"—resounded Pelagéya Iványovna's agitated whisper.

"All sorts,"—hastily replied Pólinka.[1]

"But how can you like all sorts best?"—replied Borís Andréitch. "It is difficult to assume that. For instance, there is Beethoven,—a genius of the first magnitude, and yet he is not appreciated by every one."

"No, sir,"—replied Pólinka.

"Art is varied, of course,"—pursued the ruthless Borís Andréitch.

"Yes, sir,"—replied Pólinka.

The conversation between them did not last long.

"No,"—thought Borís Andréitch as he beat a retreat from her,—"she 's no Tatyána! she is simply trepidation personified. . . ."

And poor Pólinka, as she got into bed that night, complained, with tears, to her maid how the visitor that day had worried her about music, and how she had not known what replies to make to him, and how unhappy she was when visitors

[1] Pólinka, or Pauline, is the favourite familiar form of Pelagéya (pronounced Pelagáya); —French Pélagie.—TRANSLATOR.

came: mamma did nothing but scold afterward —and that 's all the satisfaction she got out of it. . . .

At dinner Borís Andréitch sat between Kalimón Iványitch and Emeréntziya. The dinner was Russian, not fanciful, but nutritious, and much better adapted to the taste of Piótr Vasílitch than the artfully-concocted viands of the widow. Beside him sat Pólinka, and, having at last conquered her timidity, she did, at least, answer his questions. On the other hand, Emeréntziya entertained her neighbour so assiduously, that at last it became more than he could bear. She had a habit of bending her head to the right, as she lifted a morsel of food to her mouth on the left —as though she were playing with it; and Borís Andréitch took an intense dislike to this trick. Neither did he like the way she had of talking incessantly about herself, of confiding to him with emotion the most minute details of her life;— but, being a polite man, he did not in the least betray his sentiments, so that Piótr Vasílitch, who was watching him across the table, could not tell what sort of an impression Emeréntziya was making on him.

After dinner Kalimón Iványitch suddenly sank into meditation, or, to speak more plainly, grew slightly drowsy; he was accustomed to take a nap at that hour, and although, on observing that the visitors were preparing to take leave, he re-

marked several times: "But why, gentlemen, why? Won't you play a game of cards?" . . . . yet in his secret soul he was well pleased when he saw that, at last, they had taken their caps in their hands. Pelagéya Ivánovna, on the contrary, immediately grew animated, and tried, with particular insistence, to detain the visitors. Emeréntziya zealously seconded her efforts, and tried in every way to prevail upon them to remain; even Pólinka said to them: *"Mais, Messieurs . . . ."* Piótr Vasílitch replied neither "yes" nor "no," but kept glancing at his companion. Borís Andréitch, on the other hand, courteously but firmly insisted that it was indispensable that they should return home. In a word, matters proceeded as they had at the parting with Sófya Kiríllovna. After having promised to repeat their visit before long, the guests finally departed; Emeréntziya's cordial glances accompanied them clear to the dining-room, while Kalimón Ivánitch even went as far as the anteroom and, after watching Borís Andréitch's alert servant wrap up his master in his fur coat, tie a scarf round his neck, and pull his warm boots on his feet, he returned to his study and immediately fell asleep, while Pólinka, who had been reduced to a state of shamed confusion by her mother, went off to her own room up-stairs, and the two speechless female persons, one in a mob-cap and the other with a handkerchief on her head, congratulated Emeréntziya on her new conquest.

The friends drove on in silence. Borís Andréitch smiled to himself, screened as he was from Piótr Vasílitch by the raccoon collar of his fur coat, which was turned up, and waited to hear what he would say.

"Again, she is n't the right thing!"—exclaimed Piótr Vasílitch.

But this time a certain indecision was discernible in his voice, and striving to get a look at Borís Andréitch over the collar of his coat, he added in an inquiring tone:

"That 's true, is n't it—that she is n't the right thing?"

"She is n't,"—replied Borís Andréitch with a laugh.

"So I thought,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch, and after a pause, he added:—"But, after all, why is n't she the right thing? What is it that young girl lacks?"

"She lacks nothing. On the contrary, she has too much of everything. . . ."

"Precisely what do you mean by 'too much'?"

"Why, just that."

"Excuse me, Borís Andréitch, I don't understand you. If you are talking about education, is that any objection? And as for character, behaviour . . . ."

"Ekh, Piótr Vasílitch,"—returned Borís Andréitch:—"I 'm surprised that you, with your clear view of things, do not see through that lisping Emeréntziya! That simulated amiability,

that constant self-adoration, that modest confidence in her own merits, that condescension of an angel gazing down on you from the heights of heaven . . . . but what 's the use of talking! If it comes to that, and in case it is absolutely indispensable, I would twenty times rather marry her sister; she knows how to hold her tongue, at least!"

"You are right, of course,"—replied poor Piótr Vasílitch in a low voice.

Borís Andréitch's sudden sally had dumfounded him.

"No,"—he said to himself, and he said it for the first time since he had made Vyazovnín's acquaintance:—"I 'm no match for him . . . . he 's too learned."

And Vyazovnín on his side was thinking, as he gazed at the moon, which hung low over the white streak of the horizon: "And it really was like a bit out of 'Onyégin': . . .

Round and red of face was she . . . .

—but my Lensky is fine, and I 'm a pretty Onyégin!"

"Faster, drive faster, Láriushka!"—he added aloud.

"She won't do,"—jestingly inquired Borís Andréitch of Piótr Vasílitch, as he alighted from the sledge, with the aid of his footman, and

mounted the porch of his own house,—"hey, Piótr Vasílitch?"

But Piótr Vasílitch made no answer and went off to pass the night at his own house. And Emeréntziya, on the following day, wrote to her friend (she kept up a vast and lively correspondence): "Yesterday we had a new visitor, our neighbour Vyazovnín. He is a very nice, amiable man; it is immediately apparent that he is well-bred, and—shall I whisper a secret in thine ear? —I have an idea that I have made a pretty deep impression on him. But do not worry, *mon amie;* my heart has not been touched, and Valentine has no occasion to feel uneasy."

This Valentine was a teacher in the governmental gymnasium. In town he led a dissipated life, and in the country he sighed for Emeréntziya with platonic and hopeless love.

The friends again met together on the following morning, and their life flowed on as before.

A fortnight elapsed. Borís Andréitch was in daily expectation of an invitation; but Piótr Vasílitch had, apparently, utterly renounced his intentions. Borís Andréitch himself began to talk about the widow and the Tikhodúeffs, and dropped hints to the effect that everything should be subjected to three tests; but Piótr Vasílitch did not even appear to understand his hints. At last Borís Andréitch could endure it no longer, and one day he began thus:

" What 's the meaning of this, Piótr Vasílitch? Evidently, it is now my turn to remind you of your promises."

" What promises? "

" Why, don't you remember, you wanted to get me married? I 'm waiting."

Piótr Vasílitch fidgeted on his chair.

" Why, you 're so fastidious, you know! One can't suit you. God knows what you want! I don't believe there is a bride to your taste in these parts."

" That 's bad, Piótr Vasílitch. You ought not to despair so soon. You have not made a success of the first two trials, but that 's no calamity. Moreover, the widow did please me. If you give me up, I shall betake myself to her."

" All right, go along,—God bless you."

" Piótr Vasílitch, I assure you that, without jesting, I want to get married. Do take me somewhere else."

" Why, really, there is no one else in all the countryside."

" That cannot be, Piótr Vasílitch. Do you mean to say that here, in this whole neighbourhood, there is not a single pretty woman? "

" Of course there is! but they are no mates for you."

" But do name one of them."

Piótr Vasílitch gripped the amber mouthpiece of his tchubúk with his teeth.

"Why, there 's Vyérotchka Barsukóff, for instance,"—he said at last;—"what better do you want? Only, she 's not for you."

"Why?"

"Too simple."

"So much the better, Piótr Vasílitch, so much the better!"

"And her father is such an eccentric."

"That 's no misfortune. . . . Piótr Vasílitch, my friend, do introduce me to that . . . . what the deuce is her name did you say?"

"Barsukóff."

"To Miss Barsukóff . . . . please do. . . ."

And Borís Andréitch gave Piótr Vasílitch no peace until the latter promised to take him to the Barsukóffs'.

Two days later they drove to call on them.

The Barsukóff family consisted of two persons: the father, aged fifty, and the daughter, aged nineteen years. It was not without cause that Piótr Vasílitch had called the father an eccentric; he really was an eccentric of the first water. After completing his course of study in a government institute in brilliant style, he had entered the naval service, and speedily attracted the attention of the superior officers, but had soon retired, married, settled down in the country, and had gradually grown so indolent and so relaxed that, at last, he not only went nowhere—he did not even come out of his room.

Clad in a short coat lined with hare-fur, and in heelless slippers, with his hands thrust into the pockets of his full trousers, he paced back and forth, for days at a time, from one corner to another, now humming a tune, now whistling, and no matter what was said to him, he replied, with a smile, to everything, "Brau, brau!"—that is to say, "Bravo, bravo!"

"Do you know what, Stepán Petróvitch,"—a neighbour who had dropped in to call said to him,—and the neighbours visited him with pleasure, because there was no more hospitable and cordial man in the world than he,—"do you know what? They say that in Byelyóvo the price of grain has risen to thirty rubles in paper money."

"Brau, brau!"—calmly replied Barsukóff, who had just sold his for seven and a half.

"And have you heard that your neighbour, Pável Fómitch, has gambled away thirty thousand at cards?"

"Brau, brau!"—replied Barsukóff, with equal composure.

"The cattle-murrain is in Shlýkovo,"—remarked another neighbour who was sitting by.

"Brau, brau!"

"Lápin's young lady has eloped with the tutor. . . ."

"Brau, brau, brau!"

And so on, without end. He was informed that one of his horses had gone lame, that a Jew

had arrived with his wares, that the clock had fallen off the wall, that a small boy had flung his boots away somewhere—and all that was to be got out of him was: "Brau, brau!" And, nevertheless, no unusual amount of disorder was noticeable in his house: his peasants prospered, and he contracted no debts. Barsukóff's exterior made a favourable impression; his round face, with large brown eyes, a thin, regularly-formed nose, and red lips, surprised one by its almost youthful freshness. This freshness was thrown into all the more striking relief by the snowy whiteness of his hair. A faint smile hovered constantly over his lips, and yet not so much over his lips as over the dimples in his cheeks; he never laughed, but sometimes, very rarely, uttered a hysterical guffaw, and felt ill afterward, on every occasion. He said very little outside of his habitual exclamation, and only the most indispensable things, sticking, moreover, to the utmost possible abbreviations.

His daughter, Vyérotchka, resembled him greatly, both in face and in the expression of her dark eyes, which seemed still darker because of the tender hue of her blond hair, and her smile. She was small of stature, and prettily formed; there was nothing particularly attractive about her, but it was sufficient for one to cast a glance at her, or to hear her voice, to make him say to himself: "That 's a kind-hearted being." The

father and daughter loved each other. The entire management of the housekeeping was in her hands, and she liked to busy herself with it . . . . she knew no other occupations. Not without reason had Piótr Vasílitch called her simple.

When Piótr Vasílitch and Borís Andréitch arrived at Barsukóff's house, he was pacing to and fro in his study, according to his wont. This study, which might also be called the drawing-room and the dining-room, because visitors were received in it, and the table was set in it, took up about one half of Stepán Petróvitch's small house. The furniture in it was ugly but comfortable; a remarkably broad, soft divan, with a great multitude of cushions, stretched the whole length of one wall,—a divan which was well known to all the landed proprietors of the neighbourhood. Truth to tell, it was a very comfortable divan to lie upon. In the remaining rooms there were only chairs, and a few little tables, and cupboards; all these rooms opened into one another, and no one lived in them. Vyérotchka's little bedroom opened on the garden, and in addition to her neat little bed, her wash-stand with mirror attached, and one arm-chair, contained no furniture whatever; to counterbalance this, everywhere in the corners stood bottles filled with fruit-liqueurs, and jars of preserves, all labelled by Vyérotchka's own hand.

On entering the anteroom, Piótr Vasílitch was

on the point of ordering that he and Borís Andréitch should be announced, but a small boy in a long-tailed coat, who happened to be there, merely glanced at him and began to remove his fur coat, with the remark: "Pray, enter, sir." The friends entered Stepán Petróvitch's study. Piótr Vasílitch presented Borís Andréitch to him.

Stepán Petróvitch shook hands with him and said: "I 'm glad . . . . very. You must be chilled through. . . . Vodka?" And indicating with a movement of his head the appetising viands which stood on a small table, he began again to pace the room.

Borís Andréitch drank a glass of vodka, Piótr Vasílitch followed his example, and both seated themselves on the broad divan with its multitude of cushions. Borís Andréitch immediately felt as though he had been sitting all his life on that divan, and had been acquainted with the master of the house for a very long time. That was precisely the feeling which all Barsukóff's visitors experienced.

He was not alone that day; but then, he was rarely to be found alone. Some pettifogger or other was sitting with him, a man with a wrinkled, senile face, a hawk-like nose, and uneasy eyes, a completely threadbare being, who had recently been serving in a warm little post, and at the present moment found himself under indictment. Clutching his stock with one hand, and the front

of his frock-coat with the other, this gentleman was following Stepán Petróvitch with his gaze, and having waited until the visitors had seated themselves, he said with a deep sigh:

"Ekh, Stepán Petróvitch, Stepán Petróvitch! 't is easy to condemn a man; but you know the proverb: 'The honest man 's a sinner, the rascal 's a sinner, all men live by sin, so why should not we also?'"

"Brau . . . ." Stepán Petróvitch was beginning, but stopped short, and said: "'t is a bad proverb."

"Who says it is n't? Of course it 's bad,"—returned the threadbare gentleman;—"but what would you have one do! Misery is more than a match for you, you know: it drives honesty out of you. Here now, I 'm willing to leave it to these nobly-born gentlemen, if they will only deign to listen to the details of my affair. . . ."

"May we smoke?"—Borís Andréitch asked the host.

The host nodded his head.

"Of course,"—pursued the gentleman:—"and perhaps I also have been vexed at myself and at the world in general,—have felt, so to speak, righteous indignation. . . ."

"Invented by scoundrels,"—Stepán Petróvitch interrupted him.

The gentleman gave a start.

"Precisely what do you mean by that, Stepán

Petróvitch? Do you mean to say that righteous indignation was invented by scoundrels?"

Stepán Petróvitch nodded his head again.

The gentleman held his peace for a while, and then suddenly burst into a cracked laugh, which revealed the fact that he had not a single tooth left; yet he spoke quite clearly.

"He, he, Stepán Petróvitch, you are always saying such odd things! Our lawyer says of you, not without reason, that you are a regular punster."

"Brau, brau!"—responded Barsukóff.

At that moment the door opened, and Vyérotchka entered. Advancing with firm, light steps, she bore two cups of coffee and a cream-jug on a green tray. Her simple dark-grey gown fitted her slender form beautifully. Borís Andréitch and Piótr Vasílitch both rose from the divan; she made them a curtsey in response, without letting go of the tray, and stepping up to the table, she deposited her burden on it, with the remark:

"Here is some coffee for you."

"Brau,"—commented her father.—"Two more,"—he added, pointing at the guests.—"Borís Andréitch, my daughter."

Borís Andréitch made her a second obeisance.

"Would you like some coffee?"—she inquired, looking him directly and calmly in the eye.—"It is still an hour and a half to dinner-time."

"With great pleasure,"—replied Borís Andréitch.

Vyérotchka turned to Krupítzyn.

"And you, Piótr Vasílitch?"

"I will drink some also."

"You shall have it directly. I have not seen you for a long time, Piótr Vasílitch."

So saying, Vyérotchka left the room.

Borís Andréitch gazed after her and, bending over to his friend, he whispered in his ear:

"But she is very charming. . . . And what easy manners. . . ."

"Habit,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch:—"they almost keep an eating-house here, you know. When one person goes out of the door, another comes in."

As though in confirmation of Piótr Vasílitch's words, a new visitor entered the room. He was an extremely voluminous man, or, to use an old-fashioned word which still persists in our region, roly-poly, with a big face, big eyes and lips, and tousled hair. An expression of constant dissatisfaction was perceptible on his face—a sour expression. He was dressed in very capacious garments, and lurched from side to side with his whole body as he walked. He dropped heavily on the divan, and only then said: "Good morning," but without addressing himself to any one of those present.

"Vodka?"—Stepán Petróvitch asked him.

"No! vodka forsooth!"—replied the new guest;—"I 'm in no mood for vodka. How are you, Piótr Vasílitch?" he added, glancing round.

"How are you, Mikhéi Mikhéitch,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch.—"Whence has God brought you?"

"Whence? From town, of course. 'T is only you lucky dogs who don't have any occasion to go to town, you know. But I, thanks to Court of Guardianship, and to these little masters here," —he added, thrusting out his finger in the direction of the gentleman under indictment,—"I have driven all my horses to death running to town. Damn it all!"

"Mikhéi Mikhéitch, my deepest respects to you,"—said the gentleman who had been so unceremoniously designated as little master.

Mikhéi Mikhéitch glanced at him.

"Tell me one thing, please,"—he began, folding his arms:—"when are they finally going to hang thee?"

The other man took offence.

"Well, they ought to do it! By heaven, they ought to! The Government is too lenient to fellows of your stamp—that 's what! I suppose thou art melancholy because thou art under indictment? That 's nothing at all! Only one thing is vexatious, I fancy; thou canst not now—*haben sie gewesen*"—and Mikhéi Mikhéitch stuck out his hand, as though he

were catching something in the air, and then thrust it into his side-pocket.—"Ridiculous! Ekh you, disgusting little race, both big and small!"

"It pleases you always to jest,"—replied the dismissed pettifogger;—"but you will not take into consideration that the giver is free to give, and the receiver to receive. Moreover, I did not act on my own initiative in that case, and more than one person took a hand in it, as I have explained. . . ."

"Of course,"—remarked Mikhéi Mikhéitch ironically. "The fox took refuge under the harrow from the rain—not every drop will land on him anyway. But confess, our chief of police rebuked thee fiercely, did n't he? Hey? 'T was severe, was n't it?"

The man writhed.

"He 's a lively hand at training a man down,"—he said at last, hesitatingly.

"Exactly so!"

"And nevertheless, one may say of him, sir . . . ."

"That he 's a man of gold, a genuine treasure,"—Mikhéi Mikhéitch interrupted him, turning to Stepán Petróvitch.—"He 's a regular giant at handling such fine young fellows as this, and drunkards!"

"Brau, brau!"—responded Stepán Petróvitch.

Vyérotchka entered with two more cups of coffee on a tray.

Mikhéi Mikhéitch made his bow to her.

"One more,"—said her father.

"Why do you give yourself the trouble?"—Borís Andréitch said to her, as he took his cup from her.

"It is no trouble!"—replied Vyérotchka,—"and I do not care to entrust it to the butler; it seems to me that it will be more savoury thus."

"Of course, from your hands."

But Vyérotchka did not listen to his amiable remarks to the end, but went out, returning immediately with coffee for Mikhéi Mikhéitch.

"And have you heard,"—began Mikhéi Mikhéitch, as he drained his cup;—"Márya Ilínitchna is lying speechless, you know."

Stepán Petróvitch halted, and raised his head.

"Certainly, certainly,"—went on Mikhéi Mikhéitch.—"'T is paralysis. You know, of course, how fond she was of eating. So, day before yesterday, she was sitting at table, and she had guests. . . . *Botvínya*[1] was served, and she had

[1] A soup whose foundation consists of a sort of sour small beer, brewed from sour cabbage, or from rye flour (or the crusts of sour rye bread), thickened with strained spinach, tiny cubes of raw cucumber, and minced spring onions. A lump of ice is placed in the tureen. On a separate dish the adjuncts are served, and each person adds them to the above according to his taste. They consist of some sort of cold, boiled fish, cucumbers, onions, horse-radish, crawfish,—anything else which is convenient and savoury,—and sugar. When well made, it is delicious.—TRANSLATOR.

already eaten two platefuls, and was asking for a third . . . . when all of a sudden she glanced round, and said this way, deliberately, you know: 'Take away the botvínya, all the people are sitting there green' . . . and flop she went off her chair! They rushed to lift her, they asked what ailed her? . . . She explained by motions of her hands, but her tongue was no longer working. They say that our county medical man distinguished himself on that occasion, to boot. . . He sprang to his feet, and shouted: 'The doctor! send for the doctor!'—He lost his head completely. Well, and what practice does he have anyway? He gets his whole living from dead bodies."

"Brau, brau!" articulated Barsukóff, thoughtfully.

"And we are going to have botvínya to-day too,"—remarked Vyérotchka, as she sat down on the edge of a chair in one corner.

"With what? Sturgeon?"—briskly inquired Mikhéi Mikhéitch.

"With fresh sturgeon and dried sturgeon's back."

"That 's fine! Here now, they say that botvínya is not good in winter, because it is a cold dish. That 's nonsense . . . . is n't it, Piótr Vasílitch?"

"Perfect nonsense,"—replied Piótr Vasílitch; —"is n't it pretty warm here indoors?"

"Very warm."

" Then why should n't one eat a cold dish in a hot room? I don't understand."

" And I don't understand."

In this manner did the conversation run on for quite a long time. The host took hardly any part in it, and kept striding about the room. At dinner, all ate with splendid appetite, so exquisitely, though simply, was the food prepared. Vyérotchka sat at the head of the table, served the botvínya, sent the dishes round, watched how the guests ate, and tried to anticipate their wants. Vyazovnín sat beside her and gazed attentively at her. Vyérotchka could not speak without smiling, like her father, and it was very becoming to her. Vyazovnín put a question to her now and then,—not for the purpose of receiving answers from her, but with the express object of seeing that smile.

After dinner, Mikhéi Mikhéitch, Piótr Vasílitch, and the gentleman who was under indictment, whose real name was Onúfry Ílitch, sat down to play cards. Mikhéi Mikhéitch no longer expressed himself so harshly concerning him, although he continued to jeer at him; possibly this arose from the fact that Mikhéi Mikhéitch had drunk a glass too much at dinner. To tell the truth, at every deal he announced in advance that Onúfry would hold all the aces and trumps, that that small fry [1] always stacked the cards to

[1] Literally, "nettle-seed," a term of contempt applied to petty under-clerks.—Translator.

cheat, that he had thievish hands anyway; but, on the other hand, after having made a small slam with him, Mikhéi Mikhéitch began quite unexpectedly to praise him.

"Well, say what thou wilt, thou art utter rubbish,"—he said to him:—"but I love thee, by heaven I do! Because, in the first place, it is my nature to, and in the second place, when one comes to think it over, there are worse folks than thou, and I may even say that thou art a decent man, in thy way."

"You have deigned to speak the truth, Mikhéi Mikhéitch,"—replied Onúfry Ílitch, greatly encouraged by such words:—"the most downright truth; only, of course, if it were n't for persecution . . . ."

"Come, deal, deal,"—Mikhéi Mikhéitch interrupted him;—"persecution, forsooth! What persecution? ! Thou mayest thank God that thou art not sitting chained in Pugatchóff's tower at this moment. . . . Deal."

And Onúfry Ílitch began to deal the cards, briskly blinking his little eyes, and still more briskly moistening the thumb of his right hand with his long, thin tongue.

In the meanwhile, Stepán Petróvitch stalked about the room, while Borís Andréitch kept close to Vyéra. The conversation between them proceeded by fits and starts (she was constantly leaving the room), and was so insignificant that

it would be difficult to reproduce it. He questioned her as to what people dwelt in their neighbourhood, whether she often made visits, whether she was fond of housekeeping? To the question, as to what she read, she replied: "I should like to read, but I have no time." And yet, when at nightfall the small boy entered the study with the announcement that their horses were ready, he felt sorry to leave, sorry to cease seeing those kind eyes, that bright smile. If Stepán Petróvitch had taken it into his head to detain him, he certainly would have remained; but Stepán Petróvitch did nothing of the sort, —not because he was not pleased with his new guest, but because this was the established order of things in his house: if any one wished to spend the night, that person himself gave orders straight out that a bed should be prepared for him. Mikhéi Mikhéitch and Onúfry Ílitch did this; they even went to bed in the same chamber, and chatted until long after midnight; their voices were dully audible from the study; Onúfry Ílitch was the principal talker, and appeared to be narrating something, while his interlocutor merely ejaculated from time to time, now with surprise, again with approbation: "H'm!" On the following morning they drove away together to Mikhéi Mikhéitch's village, and thence to the town, still together.

On the way home both Piótr Vasílitch and

Borís Andréitch maintained silence for a long time. Piótr Vasílitch even dozed, lulled by the jingling of the bells, and the smooth motion of the sledge.

"Piótr Vasílitch!"—said Borís Andréitch at last.

"What?"—said Piótr Vasílitch, only half awake.

"Why don't you interrogate me?"

"What should I interrogate you about?"

"Why, as you did those other times—why not?"

"About Vyérotchka, you mean?"

"Yes."

"There you go! As if I destined her for you! She 's not suited to you."

"You 're mistaken in thinking so. She pleases me a great deal more than all your Emerén-tziyas and Sófya Kiríllovnas!"

"You don't mean it?"

"I do, I tell you."

"Why, good gracious!—she 's a perfectly simple young girl. She may be a good house-wife,—that 's a fact; but is that what you require, pray?"

"And why not? Perhaps that is precisely what I am in search of."

"But what are you saying, Borís Andréitch? Good heavens! why, she can't talk French at all!"

"What of that? Can't one get along without the French language?"

Piótr Vasílitch made no reply for a while.

"I did n't in the least expect this . . . . from you, that is to say . . . . it seems to me that you are jesting."

"No, I 'm not jesting."

"God knows what to make of you after this! Why, I thought that she was only a mate for a fellow like me. However, she 's really quite a nice little lass."

And Piótr Vasílitch adjusted his cap, buried his head in a cushion, and went to sleep. Borís Andréitch continued to think of Vyérotchka. He still seemed to see her smile, the merry gentleness of her eyes. The night was bright and cold, the snow gleamed with bluish fires, like diamonds; the stars were shining and the Pleiades were twinkling brilliantly; the frost crackled and creaked under the sledge-runners; the branches of the trees, covered with icy rime, tinkled faintly, as they glistened in the moonlight, as though made of glass. At such times the imagination plays freely. Vyazovnín experienced this in his own case. He thought of all sorts of things, until the sledge drew up, at last, at his porch; but the image of Vyérotchka would not get out of his head, and secretly accompanied his reveries.

Piótr Vasílitch, as we have already said, was

astonished at the impression which Vyérotchka had made on Borís Andréitch; but he was still more astonished when, a couple of days later, that same Borís Andréitch announced to him that he was bent upon driving to see Barsukóff, and that he would go alone if Piótr Vasílitch were not disposed to accompany him. Piótr Vasílitch, of course, replied that he should be delighted, and was ready, and again the friends drove to Barsukóff's house, and again spent the whole day there. As on the first occasion, they found several visitors with him, whom Vyérotchka also regaled with coffee, and after dinner with preserves; but Vyazovnín talked more with her than on the first occasion—that is, he said more to her. He told her about his past life, about Petersburg, about his travels,—in a word, about everything which came into his head. She listened to him with calm interest, smiling every now and then, but not for a single moment forgetting her duties as hostess: she rose on the instant, as soon as she perceived that the guests needed anything, and she herself brought everything to them. When she withdrew, Vyazovnín did not leave his place, and gazed peacefully about him; she returned, seated herself by his side, took up her work, and again he entered into conversation with her. Stepán Petróvitch approached them in the course of his wanderings about the room, listened to Vyazovnín's remarks, muttered:

"brau, brau!"—and so the time fairly flew by. . . . . On this occasion Vyazovnín and Piótr Vasílitch remained over night, and did not depart until the evening of the following day. . . . As he took his leave, Vyazovnín shook Vyéra's hand. She flushed faintly. No man had ever shaken hands with her before that day, but she thought, evidently, this was the established custom in Petersburg.

The two friends began to make frequent visits to Stepán Petróvitch; Borís Andréitch, in particular, made himself quite at home in the house. There were times when he felt irresistibly drawn thither, when he fairly longed to go. Several times he even went alone. Vyérotchka pleased him more and more, and a friendship was established between them, and he was already beginning to think that she was too cold and sensible a friend. Piótr Vasílitch ceased to talk to him about Vyérotchka. . . But lo, one morning, after staring at him, according to his habit, for some time in silence, he said meaningly:

"Borís Andréitch!"

"What?"—returned Borís Andréitch, and flushed slightly, without himself knowing why.

"I want to say something to you, Borís Andréitch. . . . You 'd better look out . . . . you know . . . . 't will be a bad business if, for example, anything . . . ."

"What are you trying to say?"—retorted Borís Andréitch.—"I don't understand you."

"Why, about Vyérotchka. . . ."

"About Vyérotchka?"

And Borís Andréitch blushed worse than before.

"Yes. Look out, for 't is easy to bring about a catastrophe . . . . to insult her, that is . . . . Excuse my frankness; but I consider it my duty as a friend. . . ."

"But what put that into your head, Piótr Vasílitch?"—Borís Andréitch interrupted him.—"Vyérotchka is a girl of the strictest principles, and, in conclusion, there is nothing between us but the most ordinary friendship."

"Come, enough of that, Borís Andréitch!"—interposed Piótr Vasílitch in his turn.—"What sort of friendship can there be between you, a cultured man, and a country girl, who except the four walls of her home . . . ."

"There you go again with the same old cry!"—Borís Andréitch interrupted him again.—"Why you mix culture up in the matter, is more than I can understand."

Borís Andréitch was somewhat angry.

"Come, do listen to me, Borís Andréitch,"—said Piótr Vasílitch, impatiently:—"if it has come to such a pass, I am bound to tell you that you have a perfect right to keep secrets from me, but as for deceiving me, excuse me, but you can-

not do it. For I have eyes as well as you, you see. Yesterday" (they had both been at Stepán Petróvitch's on the day before) "revealed a great deal to me. . . ."

"And what, in particular, did it reveal to you?"—inquired Borís Andréitch.

"Why, it revealed to me the fact that you are in love with her, and jealous of her."

Vyazovnín stared at Piótr Vasílitch.

"Well, and does she love me?"

"That I cannot say for certain; but it would be strange if she did not fall in love with you."

"Because I am well-educated, you mean to say."

"For that reason, and also because you have a fine estate. Well, and your personal appearance might please also. But your property is the principal thing."

Vyazovnín rose and walked to the window.

"How could you notice that I was jealous?" —he asked, suddenly turning toward Piótr Vasílitch.

"Because you were utterly unlike yourself yesterday, until that oaf Karántyeff took his departure."

Vyazovnín made no reply, but he felt in his soul that his friend was speaking the truth. This Karántyeff was a student who had not completed his course, a merry and far from stupid young fellow, with soul, but who had been led utterly

astray and had gone to destruction. Passions had exhausted his powers in early youth; he had been left without guardianship too early. He had an audacious gipsy face, and altogether he resembled a gipsy; he sang and danced like a gipsy. He fell in love with all women. Vyérotchka pleased him greatly. Borís Andréitch made his acquaintance at Barsukóff's, and at first entertained a very friendly feeling toward him; but noticing one day the peculiar expression of countenance wherewith Vyérotchka was listening to his songs, he began to think differently about him.

"Piótr Vasílitch,"—said Borís Andréitch, stepping up to his friend, and coming to a halt in front of him,—"I must confess . . . . that it seems to me you are right. I have felt so this long time, but you have definitively opened my eyes for me. I really am not indifferent to Vyérotchka; but hearken, Piótr Vasílitch, what does that amount to? Neither she nor I desire anything dishonourable; moreover, I have told you, I believe, that I see no particular signs of affection for me on her side."

"All that is so,"—returned Piótr Vasílitch,—"but the Evil One is strong."

Borís Andréitch made no reply for a while.

"What am I to do, Piótr Vasílitch?"

"What? Stop going there."

"Do you think so?"

"Of course. . . . You can't marry her!"

Again Vyazovnín held his peace for a space.

"And why should n't I marry her?"—he exclaimed at last.

"I have already told you why, Borís Andréitch; she 's no mate for you."

"I don't see that."

"If you don't see it, do as you like. I 'm not your guardian."

And Piótr Vasílitch began to stuff his pipe with tobacco.

Borís Andréitch sat down by the window, and became engrossed in meditation.

Piótr Vasílitch did not interfere with him and continued with the utmost composure to emit tiny clouds of smoke from his mouth. At last Borís Andréitch rose, and with visible agitation ordered the horses to be harnessed.

"Whither away?"—Piótr Vasílitch asked him.

"To the Barsukóffs'"—replied Borís Andréitch.

Piótr Vasílitch took five puffs.

"Do you want me to go with you?"

"No, Piótr Vasílitch; I should like to go alone to-day. I want to have an explanation with Vyérotchka."

"As you please."

"There now,"—he said to himself, after he had seen Borís Andréitch off,—"things seem to be coming to a head. . . But he always was a

lucky dog,"—he added, as he stretched himself out on the divan.

On the evening of that same day, as Piótr Vasílitch, without waiting for his friend, was preparing to get into bed in his own house, Borís Andréitch, all powdered with snow, suddenly burst into the room, and flung himself on his neck.

"My friend, Piótr Vasílitch, congratulate me!"—he cried, for the first time addressing him as *thou;*—"she consents, and so does the old man. . . . Everything is already settled!"

"What . . . . do you mean?"—mumbled the astonished Piótr Vasílitch.

"I am going to be married!"

"To Vyérotchka?"

"Yes. . . . Everything is already decided and arranged."

"Can it be?"

"What a man thou art! . . . everything is settled, I tell thee."

Piótr Vasílitch hastily put his slippers on his bare feet, threw on his dressing-gown, and shouted:

"Makedóniya, tea!"—adding:—"Well, if everything is already settled, there 's no use in discussing it; may God grant you concord and counsel! But, tell me, please, how this has come about."

It is worth noting that from that moment the

two friends began to address each other as *thou* just as though they had never done anything else.

"Certainly, with pleasure,"—replied Vyazovnín, and began his narration.

As a matter of fact, this is what had taken place.

When Borís Andréitch had reached Stepán Petróvitch's, the latter had not a single visitor with him, contrary to his custom, and he himself was not stalking about the room, but was sitting in a Voltaire chair: he was not feeling well. He ceased speaking altogether, when he was in that condition, and consequently nodded his head amicably to Vyazovnín as he entered, pointed out to him first the table with the cold luncheon, then Vyérotchka, and closed his eyes. That was all Vyazovnín required; he seated himself beside Vyérotchka, and entered into a low-voiced conversation with her. They discussed the health of Stepán Petróvitch.

"I am always frightened,"—said Vyérotchka, in a whisper,—"when he is ill. He 's so odd, you know; he never complains, he never asks for anything; you can't get a word out of him. If he is ill, he will not say so."

"And do you love him very much?"—Vyazovnín asked her.

"Who? Papa? Yes, more than any one in the

world. God forbid that anything should happen to him! I think I should die!"

"That means that it would be impossible for you to part from him?"

"Part from him? Why should I?"

Borís Andréitch looked her full in the face.

"A young girl cannot live all her life in her father's house."

"Ah! So that is what you mean. . . . Well, I am at ease on that score. . . . Who will take me?"

"I!" Borís Andréitch came near saying, but restrained himself.

"What makes you thoughtful?"—she asked, looking at him with her wonted smile.

"I am thinking,"—he replied,—"I am thinking . . . . that . . . ." And suddenly changing his tone, he asked her whether she had known Karántyeff long.

"Really, I don't remember. . . . So many of them come to see papa, you know. I think he called on us last year for the first time."

"Tell me; do you like him?"

"No,"—replied Vyérotchka, after reflecting a while.

"Why?"

"He is so untidy,"—she replied artlessly.—"He must be a nice man, however, and he sings so splendidly . . . . one's heart stirs within one when he sings."

"Ah!"—articulated Vyazovnín, and after a brief pause, he added:—"But whom do you like?"

"I like a great many people,—I like you."

"You and I are friends, of course. But don't you like some one of the others better?"

"How inquisitive you are!"

"And you are very cold."

"How so?"—asked Vyérotchka, ingenuously.

"Listen . . . ." Vyazovnín was beginning.

But at that moment Stepán Petróvitch turned in his chair.

"Listen,"—he went on, in a barely audible tone, while his blood fairly throbbed in his throat,—"I must say something to you, something very important . . . . only not here."

"Where, then?"

"The next room would do."

"What is it?"—asked Vyérotchka, rising. "A secret, I suppose?"

"Yes, a secret."

"A secret,"—repeated Vyérotchka, with surprise, and went into the adjoining room.

Vyazovnín followed her, as in a fever.

"Well, what is it?"—she asked with curiosity.

Borís Andréitch would have liked to lead up to the point from afar; but when he looked into that young face, animated by that faint smile which he so loved, into those clear eyes, which gazed forth with so gentle a glance, he lost his

head and quite unexpectedly to himself, without any preliminaries, he asked Vyérotchka point-blank:

"Vyéra Stepánovna, will you be my wife?"

"What?"—asked Vyérotchka, flushing all over, so that her very ears were crimson.

"Will you be my wife?"—repeated Vyazovnín, mechanically.

"I . . . . I—really, I don't know—I did not expect . . . . this is so . . . ." whispered Vyéra, putting her hands on the window-sill, to keep from falling,—then she suddenly fled from the room to her own chamber.

Borís Andréitch stood for a while where he was, and then, in great perturbation returned to the study. On the table lay a copy of *The Moscow News*. He picked it up, seated himself, and began to glance over the lines, not only without understanding what was printed there, but even having no conception on the whole as to what had happened to him. He spent about a quarter of an hour in this condition; but then a faint rustle resounded behind him, and without looking around, he felt that Vyéra had entered.

Several more moments passed. He darted an oblique glance from behind the sheet of the *News*. She was sitting by the window, and seemed pale. At last he summoned his courage, rose, went to her, and dropped into a chair by her side. . . .

Stepán Petróvitch did not stir as he sat with head thrown back in his arm-chair.

"Pardon me, Vyéra Stepánovna,"—began Vyazovnín, with a certain amount of effort:—"I am to blame; I ought not to have so suddenly . . . . and yet . . . . I had no reason, of course, to . . . ."

Vyérotchka made him no reply.

"But since it has happened so,"—went on Borís Andréitch,—"I should like to know what answer . . . ."

Vyérotchka softly dropped her eyes; again her cheeks flushed crimson.

"Vyéra Stepánovna, one word."

"I . . . really, I don't know, Borís Andréitch . . . ."—she began,—"that depends on papa. . . ."

"Ill?"—Stepán Petróvitch's voice suddenly rang out.

Vyérotchka started, and hastily raised her head. Stepán Petróvitch's eyes, riveted upon her, expressed uneasiness. She immediately went to him.

"Did you ask me something, papa?"

"Ill?"—he repeated.

"Who? I? No. . . . What makes you think so?"

He gazed intently at her.

"Really well?"—he continued his inquiries.

"Of course; how do you feel?"

"Brau, brau,"—he said quietly, and again closed his eyes.

Vyérotchka was walking toward the door, but Borís Andréitch stopped her.

"Tell me, at least, do you permit me to speak to your father?"

"As you like,"—she whispered:—"only, it seems to me, Borís Andréitch, that I am no mate for you."

Borís Andréitch tried to take her hand, but she evaded him, and left the room. "How strange!" —he thought.—"She says the same thing as Krupítzyn."

When he was left alone with Stepán Petróvitch, Borís Andréitch promised himself that he would explain himself to him in a very judicious manner, and so far as he was able, prepare him for the unexpected proposal; but when it came to action, it proved to be far more difficult even than with Vyérotchka. Stepán Petróvitch was slightly feverish, and being in a condition which was neither exactly meditation nor yet exactly a doze, replied reluctantly and slowly to the various questions and remarks, by means of which Borís Andréitch was hoping gradually to lead up to the real topic of the conversation. . . . In a word, Borís Andréitch, perceiving that all his hints were being wasted, made up his mind, willy-nilly, to come straight to the point.

Several times he inhaled a long breath, as though preparing to speak, then stopped short, without uttering a word.

"Stepán Petróvitch,"—he began at last,—"I intend to make you a proposal which will greatly astonish you."

"Brau, brau,"—said Stepán Petróvitch, calmly.

"A proposal which you are not expecting in the least."

Stepán Petróvitch opened his eyes.

"Only please don't be angry with me. . . ."

Stepán Petróvitch's eyes opened wider than ever.

"I . . . . I intend to ask of you the hand of your daughter, Vyéra Stepánovna."

Stepán Petróvitch rose quickly from his Voltaire chair.

"What?"—he asked, in precisely the same voice, and with precisely the same expression as Vyérotchka.

Borís Andréitch was compelled to repeat his proposal.

Stepán Petróvitch riveted his gaze on Vyazovnín, and stared long and in silence at him, so that, at last, the latter became uncomfortable.

"Does Vyéra know?"—inquired Stepán Petróvitch.

"I have had an explanation with Vyéra Stepánovna, and she has given me permission to address myself to you."

"Have you just had the explanation with her?"

"Yes, a little while ago."

"Wait,"—said Stepán Petróvitch, and left the room.

Borís Andréitch was left alone in the eccentric's study. He was staring, in a numb sort of way, now at the walls, now at the floor, when suddenly the trampling of hoofs rang out at the porch, the door of the anteroom banged, and a thick voice inquired: "At home?" Steps became audible, and Mikhéi Mikhéitch, with whom we are already acquainted, burst into the room.

Borís Andréitch was ready to swoon with vexation.

"Whew, how hot it is here!"—exclaimed Mikhéi Mikhéitch, as he dropped down on the divan. —"Ah, good morning! And where is Stepán Petróvitch?"

"He has gone out; he will be back directly."

"It 's frightfully cold to-day,"—remarked Mikhéi Mikhéitch, pouring himself out a glass of vodka.

And almost before he had fairly swallowed it, he said vivaciously:

"I come from town again, you know."

"From town?"—returned Vyazovnín, with difficulty concealing his confusion.

"Yes, from town,"—repeated Mikhéi Mikhéitch;—"and all thanks to that brigand Onúfry.

Just imagine, he told me such a damned pack of lies, he set such dastardly wheels in motion, that áï-lullaby, my joy! ' I 've found such an affair for you,' says he, ' the like of which has never before existed in the world; simply—all you have to do is to rake in the rubles.' And the affair ended by his borrowing twenty-five rubles from me, and I dragged myself to town in vain, and have utterly exhausted my horses."

" You don't say so! "—muttered Vyazovnín.

" I tell you, he 's a brigand, a brigand, if ever there was one. All he has to do is to take to the road with an iron ball hitched to a strap. Really, I don't understand what the police are about. Why, one would be reduced to beggary by him if one went on in that way, by God! "

Stepán Petróvitch entered the room.

Mikhéi Mikhéitch began to narrate to him his adventures with Onúfry.

" And why does n't somebody wring his neck? "—he exclaimed.

" Wring his neck,"—repeated Stepán Petróvitch, and suddenly began to roar with laughter.

Mikhéi Mikhéitch also began to laugh, as he looked at him, and even repeated: " Exactly; he ought to have his neck wrung." But when Stepán Petróvitch fell back, at last, on the divan, in convulsions of hysterical laughter, Mikhéi Mikhéitch turned to Borís Andréitch and said, throwing his hands somewhat apart:

"He 's always like that: he 'll suddenly take to laughing,—the Lord only knows at what. He has so much arrogance!"

Vyérotchka entered, all agitated, with reddened eyes.

"Papa is not quite well to-day,"—she remarked, in an undertone to Mikhéi Mikhéitch.

Mikhéi Mikhéitch nodded, and thrust a bit of cheese into his mouth. At last Stepán Petróvitch stopped, rose, sighed, and began to pace the room. Borís Andréitch avoided his glances, and sat as though on pins and needles. Mikhéi Mikhéitch began again to abuse Onúfry Ílitch.

They sat down to dinner; at table also, no one spoke but Mikhéi Mikhéitch. At last, as evening was drawing on, Stepán Petróvitch took Borís Andréitch's arm, and silently led him into the next room.

"Are you a good man?"—he asked, looking him in the face.

"I am an honest man, Stepán Petróvitch,"—replied Borís Andréitch:—"I can guarantee that,—and I love your daughter."

"You love her? Truly?"

"I do, and I shall endeavour to win her love."

"You will not get tired of her?" Stepán Petróvitch put another question.

"Never!"

Stepán Petróvitch's face contracted with pain.

" Well, see that you don't. . . . You love her . . . . I consent."

Borís Andréitch tried to embrace him, but he said:

" Afterward . . . . good."

And wheeling round, he went to the wall. Borís Andréitch could see that he was weeping.

Stepán Petróvitch wiped his eyes without turning round, then went back to the study, passing Borís Andréitch, and, without looking at him, he said with his habitual smile:

" That will do for to-day, if you please . . . . to-morrow . . . . everything . . . . that is necessary . . . ."

" Very well, very well," hastily replied Borís Andréitch, and entering the study in his wake, he exchanged a glance with Vyérotchka.

He felt joyful in soul, yet embarrassed at the same time. He could not remain long at Stepán Petróvitch's in company with Mikhéi Mikhéitch; he felt the imperative necessity of being alone,—and, moreover, he longed to see Piótr Vasílitch. He departed, promising to return the next day. As he took leave of Vyérotchka in the anteroom, he kissed her hand; she gazed at him.

" Until to-morrow,"— he said to her.

" Farewell,"—she replied, softly.

" So there, you see, Piótr Vasílitch,"—said Borís Andréitch, as he concluded his recital, and

strode to and fro in his bedroom,—" something has occurred to me. Why does it frequently happen that a young man does not marry? Because it seems to him a terrible thing to enslave his life; he thinks: ' What 's the hurry? There 's plenty of time; perhaps I 'll wait for a better chance.' And he ends, generally, by becoming a grumpy old bachelor, or he marries the first woman he hits upon; all that is selfishness and pride. I shall never find a better wife for myself than Vyérotchka; and if she is somewhat lacking from the side of education, I shall make it my business to attend to that. She has quite a phlegmatic disposition, but that 's no misfortune—quite the contrary! That is why I made up my mind so quickly. And thou didst advise me to marry. But if I have made a mistake,"—he added, then paused, and after brief reflection, went on:—" there 's no great harm done! My life would not have amounted to anything as it is!"

Piótr Vasílitch listened in silence to his friend, now and then sipping from a cracked glass the very bad tea prepared by the zealous Makedóniya.

" Why dost thou not say something?"—Borís Andréitch asked him at last, coming to a halt in front of him.—" I certainly am talking practically, am I not? Thou agreest with me, dost thou not?"

" The proposal has been made,"—replied

Piótr Vasílitch, pausing between his words:— "the father has given his blessing, the daughter has not refused, consequently, further discussion is useless. Perhaps everything really is for the best. We must think of the wedding now, and not argue; but the morning is wiser than the evening. . . . We will talk things over in proper style to-morrow.—Hey! Who 's there? escort Borís Andréitch."

"But do embrace me; at least, congratulate me,"—replied Borís Andréitch. "What a fellow thou art, really!"

"As for embracing, I 'll embrace thee with pleasure."

And Piótr Vasílitch embraced Borís Andréitch.

"May God give thee every good thing on this earth!"

The friends parted.

"'T is all because,"—said Piótr Vasílitch aloud to himself, as he turned on his other side, after having lain for some time in bed,—"'t is all because he has not been in the military service! He has got into the habit of being capricious, and does n't know the regulations."

A MONTH later, Vyazovnín married Vyérotchka. He himself had urgently requested that the wedding should not be delayed. Piótr Vasílitch acted as his best man. Vyazovnín drove to Stepán Pe-

tróvitch's every day during that month; but no change was observable in his demeanour to Vyérotchka, or in hers to him: she had become more shy with him—that was all. He brought her "Yury Miloslávsky," and himself read aloud to her several chapters. Zagóskin's [1] romance pleased her; but when she had finished it, she did not ask for another. Karántyeff came once to take a look at Vyérotchka, who had become the betrothed of another man, and it must be admitted that he came in a state of intoxication, stared at her uninterruptedly, as though preparing to say something, but said nothing; he was asked to sing, and started up some mournful ditty or other, then began a dashing lay, flung his guitar on the divan, bade every one farewell, and on taking his seat in his sledge, fell prone on the hay with which the bottom was spread, and began to sob—and a quarter of an hour later was plunged in drunken slumber.

Vyérotchka was very sad on the eve of the wedding, and Stepán Petróvitch also was depressed. He had hoped that Borís Andréitch would consent to remove to his house for permanent residence; but he said not a word about this and, on the contrary, Borís Andréitch proposed to Stepán Petróvitch that he should settle down at Vyázovna for a while. The old man declined; he was

[1] Mikhaíl Vasílievitch Zagóskin, a writer in the thirties of the nineteenth century.—Translator.

accustomed to his study. Vyérotchka promised to visit him once a week at least. How dejectedly did her father answer: "Brau, brau!"

So, then, Borís Andréitch began his life as a married man. At first everything went finely. Vyérotchka, being a capital housewife, established order in his house. He admired her noiseless but solicitous activity, her perennially bright and gentle temper, he called her "his little Dutch woman," and kept incessantly repeating to Piótr Vasílitch that he now knew, for the first time, what happiness was. It must be noted, that Piótr Vasílitch, from the day of the wedding, ceased to come to him so frequently as before, and did not sit so long with him, although Borís Andréitch, as of yore, received him with great cordiality, and Vyérotchka was sincerely attached to him.

"Thy life is no longer what it was,"—he said to Vyazovnín, when the latter affectionately accused him of having grown cold toward him:—"thou art a married man, I am a bachelor. I might be in the way."

At first Vyazovnín did not contradict him; but before long, he gradually began to perceive that he was bored at home without Krupítzyn. His wife was not at all in his way; on the contrary, he sometimes quite forgot her existence, and for whole mornings in succession he did not say a word to her, although he always gazed with satisfaction and tenderness in her face; and every

time that she walked past him with her light step, he caught her hand and kissed it, which invariably evoked a smile on her lips. The smile was the one which he so loved; but enough concerning that smile.

There was too little in common between them, and he began to divine this.

"Well, there 's no denying that my wife has very few resources,"—thought Borís Andréitch one day, as he sat, with folded arms, on the divan.

Vyérotchka's words, which she had said to him on the day he made his proposal,—"I am not a mate for you,"—began to resound in his soul.

"If I were some German or learned man,"—he pursued his meditations,—"or if I had any steady occupation which engrossed the greater part of my time, such a wife would be a treasure; but as it is! Can it be that I have made a mistake?" . . . . This last thought was more torturing to him than he had anticipated.

When, that same morning, Piótr Vasílitch repeated to him once more that he would not disturb them, he was in no condition to contain himself, and blurted out:

"Good gracious! thou dost not disturb us in the least; on the contrary, it is much jollier for us when thou art present . . . ." He came near saying "much more comfortable."—And it was really so.

Borís Andréitch gladly chatted with Piótr

Vasílitch in exactly the same manner as he had before his marriage; and Vyérotchka knew how to talk to him, but she stood too greatly in awe of her husband, and with all her indubitable affection for him she did not know what to say to him, how to entertain him. . . .

In addition to this, she saw that the presence of Piótr Vasílitch made him animated. The end of it all was, that Piótr Vasílitch became an absolutely indispensable person in Borís Andréitch's house. He became as fond of Vyérotchka as of a daughter; and it was impossible not to love so amiable a being. When Borís Andréitch, thanks to human weakness, confided to him his most intimate thoughts and complaints, Piótr Vasílitch vigorously reproved him for his ingratitude, enumerated to him all Vyérotchka's merits, and one day, in reply to a remark of Borís Andréitch, to the effect that he, Piótr Vasílitch, himself had certainly thought them unsuited to each other, he answered him angrily that he was not worthy of her.

"I have found nothing in her,"—muttered Borís Andréitch.

"What dost thou mean by that? Why, didst thou expect anything remarkable from her? Thou hast found a splendid wife in her. That 's what!"

"That is true,"—hastily replied Vyazovnín.

In Vyazovnín's house, everything went on as

before—peaceably and quietly, because there was no possibility of quarrelling with Vyérotchka—not even a misunderstanding could exist between her and her husband; but the internal rupture could be detected in everything. Thus is the influence of an invisible internal wound perceptible in a man's whole being. Vyérotchka was not in the habit of complaining; moreover, she did not, even mentally, blame Vyazovnín for anything, and it never once entered his head that she did not find it altogether easy to live with him. Two persons only understood her position: her old father and Piótr Vasílitch. Stepán Petróvitch petted her, and gazed into her eyes with a certain compassion when she went to see him,—he did not question her about anything, but he sighed more frequently as he paced his room, and his "brau, brau!" no longer had, as before, the ring of unperturbed peace of a soul which has withdrawn from all that is earthly. Separated from his daughter, he seemed to have grown paler and thinner.

Neither was what was going on in her soul a secret to Piótr Vasílitch. Vyérotchka did not in the least demand that her husband should occupy himself with her, or even chat with her; but the thought that she was a burden to him pained her. One day, Piótr Vasílitch found her standing motionless with her face to the wall. Like her father, whom she resembled in an extraor-

dinary degree, she did not like to display her tears, and turned away when she wept, even if she was alone in the room. . . . Piótr Vasílitch walked softly past her, and afterward did not allow her to suspect, from the slightest hint, that he understood why she had been standing with her face to the wall. On the other hand, he gave Vyazovnín no peace. Not once, it is true, did he utter in his presence those insultingly-irritating, useless, and conceited words: " I told thee beforehand exactly how it would be! "—those words which, we may remark in passing, the very best of people are unable to refrain from uttering in moments of the most fervent sympathy; but he pitilessly attacked Borís Andréitch for his indifference and spleen, and once worked him into such a state that he ran to Vyérotchka, and began uneasily to scrutinise and interrogate her. She looked at him so gently and answered him so calmly, that he went away, inwardly perturbed by Piótr Vasílitch's reproaches, but content that Vyérotchka, at least, suspected nothing. . . . So passed the winter.

Such relations cannot last long: they either end in a rupture, or undergo a change which is rarely for the better. . . .

Borís Andréitch did not become irritable and exacting, as often happens with people who feel conscious that they are in the wrong, neither did he permit himself the cheap satisfaction in which

even clever persons frequently indulge, of jeering and ridicule, and he did not sink into melancholy; he simply began to be preoccupied by the thought, how he might get away from the place, —for a time, of course.

"Travel!" he kept repeating to himself when he rose in the morning. "Travel!" he whispered as he went to bed: in that word there lay hidden seductive enchantment for him. He made an attempt to frequent the society of Sófya Kiríllovna, for diversion, but her loquacity and her freedom of manner, her smiles and grimaces, seemed extremely mawkish to him. "She 's not to be compared with Vyérotchka!"—he thought, as he gazed at the showily-attired widow, and yet the idea of getting away from that same Vyérotchka never left him. . . .

The breath of approaching spring,—that spring which draws and entices even the birds from beyond the sea,—dissipated his last misgivings, turned his head. He went off to Petersburg, on the pretext of some weighty business that could not be postponed, which up to that time had never so much as been mentioned. . . . As he took leave of Vyérotchka, he suddenly felt his heart contract and bleed; he felt sorry for his kind, quiet wife. Tears gushed from his eyes, and bedewed her white brow, which he had just touched with his lips. . . . "I shall return soon, very soon, and I will write, my darling!"—he

said over and over again,—and committing her to the attention and friendship of Piótr Vasílitch, he seated himself in his calash, profoundly moved and sad. . . . His sadness vanished instantly at the sight of the first tenderly-green willows on the highway, which ran two versts distant from his village; an incomprehensible, almost youthful rapture set his heart to beating hard; his breast heaved, and he eagerly riveted his eyes on the far distance.

"No!"—he exclaimed;—"I see that—

> To the same cart one must not hitch
> A war-horse and a timorous doe. . . ."

But what sort of a war-horse was he?

Vyéra was left alone; but, in the first place, Piótr Vasílitch called upon her frequently, and, best of all, her old father made up his mind to tear himself from his beloved abode, and removed for a time to his daughter's house. And those three began to live gloriously together. Their tastes, their habits, coincided! And yet, Vyazovnín not only was not forgotten by them, —quite the contrary, he served them all as an invisible bond of union; they talked incessantly about him, about his cleverness, his kindness, about the good-breeding and simplicity of his manners. It was as though they had come to be fonder than ever of Borís Andréitch during his

absence from home. Splendid weather set in; the days did not fly, no, they passed peacefully and cheerfully, like the bright, high-hanging clouds in the clear blue sky. Vyazovnín wrote rarely; his letters were read and re-read with great satisfaction. In each of them he spoke of his speedy return. . . . At last, one day, Piótr Vasílitch received from him the following epistle:

Dear Friend, my very kind Piótr Vasílitch! I have meditated long how to begin this letter; but, obviously, the best way will be to tell thee point-blank that I am going abroad. This news will, I know, surprise thee and even anger thee: thou couldst not possibly have expected it,—and thou wilt be doing quite right if thou callest me a light-minded and dissipated man; and I have not the slightest intention of justifying myself, and even at this moment I feel myself blushing. But listen to what I have to say with some lenience. In the first place, I am going for a very short time only, and in such company and on such advantageous terms as thou canst not possibly imagine to thyself; and, in the second place, I am firmly convinced that, after having played the fool for the last time, for the last time satisfied my passion to see and experience everything, I shall become a capital husband, family man, and stay-at-home, and shall prove that I know how to value the undeserved favour which Fate has done me in conferring upon me such a wife as Vyérotchka. Please convince her of this, and show her this letter. I shall not write to her now myself: I have not the spirit for that,—but I shall write without fail from Stettin, to which port the steamer

is bound; and in the meantime, tell her that I am kneeling before her, and humbly entreating her not to grieve for her stupid husband. Knowing her angelic disposition, I am persuaded that she will forgive me; and I swear by everything in the world that three months hence, not later, I will return to Vyázovna, and then you won't be able to get me away from there by force to the end of my days. Farewell, or rather—good-bye for a short time; I embrace thee and kiss my Vyérotchka's charming hands. I will write to thee from Stettin, where letters are to be addressed to me. In case of any unforeseen business, and in regard to the management of the estate in general, I depend upon thee, as upon a stone wall. Thy

Borís Vyazovnín.

P. S. Order my study to be papered in the autumn . . . . without fail . . . . dost hear me?

Alas! The hopes expressed by Borís Andréitch in this letter were not destined to fulfilment. Owing to a multitude of cares and new impressions, he did not find time to write from Stettin to Vyérotchka; but from Hamburg he sent her a letter, in which he informed her of his intention to visit Paris,—for the purpose of inspecting several industrial establishments, and also for the purpose of attending certain necessary lectures, —and requested her to address his letters there, *poste restante,* for the future.

Vyazovnín reached Paris in the morning, and,

having in the course of the day made the round of the boulevards, the garden of the Tuilleries, the Place de la Concorde, the Palais Royal, and having even ascended the Colonne Vendôme, he dined solidly, and with the air of a habitué at Véfour's, and in the evening betook himself to the Château-des-Fleurs—to find out, in the capacity of spectator, what the "cancan" really was, and how the Parisians execute that dance. The dance itself did not please Vyazovnín; but one of the Parisiennes, who had executed the cancan, a lively, slender brunette with a snub-nose and bold eyes, did please him. He began to stop beside her more and more frequently, first exchanging glances with her, then smiles, then words. . . . Half an hour later, she was walking arm in arm with him, had told him *son petit nom,—Julie,*—and had hinted that she was hungry, and that nothing could be better than a supper *à la Maison d'Or, dans un petit cabinet particulier.* Borís Andréitch himself was not hungry in the least, and, moreover, supper in the company of Mademoiselle Julie had not entered into his calculations. . . . "But, if that is the custom here,"—he thought,—"I must go. *Partons!*"—he said aloud,—but at that moment, some one trod on his foot in a very painful manner. He cried out, turned round, and beheld before him a middle-aged gentleman, very thick-set and broad-shouldered, in a tight stock, and a civilian's coat but-

toned to the throat, and full trousers of military cut. With his hat pulled down on his very nose, from beneath which his dyed moustache hung down in two little cascades, and with the pockets of his trousers outspread by the thumbs of his hairy hands, this gentleman,—an infantry officer, by all the tokens—had riveted his eyes straight on Vyazovnín's face. The expression of his yellow eyes, of his rough, flat cheeks, of his bluish, protruding cheek-bones, of his whole countenance, was churlish and insolent.

"Was it *you* who trod on my foot?"—said Vyazovnín.

"*Oui, monsieur. . .*"

"But in such cases . . . . people beg pardon."

"And what if I don't choose to beg your pardon, *monsieur le Moscovite?*"

Parisians instantly recognise Russians.

"That means that you intended to insult me?" —inquired Vyazovnín.

"*Oui, monsieur;* I don't like the shape of your nose."

"*Fi, le gros jaloux!*"—whispered Mademoiselle Julie, to whom, apparently, the infantry officer was not a stranger. . . .

"But in that case . . . ." began Vyazovnín, as though perplexed. . . .

"You mean to say,"—interposed the officer: —"in that case, we must fight. Of course. Very good, sir. Here is my card."

"And here is mine,"—replied Vyazovnín,—and without ceasing to wonder, and as though asleep, with a confused beating of the heart, he scribbled on the shining paper of his visiting-card, with a gold pencil which he had just purchased as a trinket for his watch-chain, the words: "Hôtel des Trois Monarques, No. 46."

The officer nodded, remarked that he "would have the honour of sending his seconds to M-r. . . . M-r." . . . (he raised Vyazovnín's card to his right eye), "to M-r. de Vazavononin"—and turned his back on Borís Andréitch, who immediately quitted the Château-des-Fleurs. Mademoiselle Julie attempted to detain him,—but he looked very coldly on her. . . . She slowly turned away from him, and for a long time thereafter, sitting down apart, she was engaged in explaining something to the angry officer, who, as before, did not remove his hands from his trousers, kept twitching his moustache, and did not smile. . . .

On emerging into the street, Vyazovnín read the card which had been handed to him for the second time, and with great attention, under the first gas-lamp he came to. On it stood the following words: *"Alexandre Lebœuf, capitaine en second au 83-me de ligne."*

"Can it be possible that this will have any consequences?"—he thought, as he wended his way back to his hotel. "Can it be possible that I shall really fight! And for what? and on the very day

after my arrival in Paris! How stupid!"—He began letters to Vyérotchka and to Piótr Vasílitch,—and immediately tore up and threw away the letters thus begun. "Nonsense! a mere comedy!"—he repeated, and lay down to sleep.—But his thoughts took another turn when, on the following morning, at breakfast, two gentlemen presented themselves to him, who bore a strong resemblance to M. Lebœuf, only somewhat younger (all French infantry officers have one and the same cast of countenance), and, announcing their names (one was M-r. Lecocq, the other M-r. Pinochet—and both served as lieutenants *"au 83-me de ligne"*), introduced themselves to Borís Andréitch in the capacity of seconds *"de notre ami, M-r. Lebœuf,"* sent by him for the purpose of taking the requisite measures, as their friend, M-r. Lebœuf, could not accept any excuses. Vyazovnín was compelled, on his side, to inform the officers, the friends of M-r. Lebœuf, that, being a newcomer in Paris, he had not yet had time to look about him, and provide himself with seconds . . . ("One is sufficient, is it not?"—he added.—"Entirely sufficient," replied M-r. Pinochet), and therefore he must request the officers to grant him four hours' grace. The officers exchanged glances, shrugged their shoulders, but consented, and rose from their seats.

*"Si monsieur le désire,"*—suddenly remarked M-r. Pinochet, stopping short at the door (of the

two seconds he was, evidently, the more ready of speech, and had been commissioned to do the talking—M-r. Lecocq only grunted approvingly).—"*Si monsieur le désire,*"—he repeated (at this point, Vyazovnín recalled M'sieu Galassi, his Moscow hairdresser, who frequently employed that phrase):—"we can recommend one of the officers of our regiment, *le lieutenant Barbichon, un garçon très dévoué,* who will certainly consent to render '*à un gentleman*'" (M-r. Pinochet pronounced this word in French fashion: *zhantleman*)—"the service of extricating him from a dilemma, and, on becoming your second, will take your interests to heart—*prendra à cœur vos intérêts.*"

Vyazovnín was astonished, at first, by such a proposition, but, on reflecting that he had no acquaintances in Paris, he thanked M-r. Pinochet, and said that he would expect M-r. Barbichon.—And M-r. Barbichon made no delay in presenting himself. This *garçon très dévoué* proved to be an extremely alert and active individual. Declaring that "*cet animal de Lebœuf n'en fait jamais d'autres . . . c'est un Othello, monsieur, un véritable Othello*"—he asked Vyazovnín: "*N'est ce pas, vous désirez que l'affaire soit sérieuse?*" and without waiting for an answer, exclaimed, "*C'est tout ce que je désirais savoir! Laissez-moi faire!*"—And, in fact, he conducted the affair in such brisk fashion, he took Vyazov-

nín's interests so warmly to heart that, four hours later, poor Borís Andréitch, who had never known how to fence in his life, was standing in the very centre of a small glade in the Bois de Vincennes, sword in hand, with shirt-sleeves rolled up, and without his coat, two paces distant from his antagonist, who was similarly disrobed. The scene was illuminated by brilliant sunlight. Vyazovnín was utterly unable to explain clearly to himself how he had got there; he continued to repeat to himself: "How stupid this is! how stupid this is!" and he felt conscience-stricken,—as though he were taking part in some vulgar prank,—and an awkward smile, concealed within, never quitted his soul, while his eyes could not tear themselves away from the low forehead, and the closely-clipped black hair of the Frenchman who towered aloft before him.

"*Tout est prêt!*"—rang out a lisping voice. "*Allez!*"—squeaked another voice.

M-r. Lebœuf's face assumed an expression which was not so much malicious as rapacious. Vyazovnín flourished his sword. . . (Pinochet had assured him that ignorance of the art of fencing gave him great advantages: "*de grands avantages!*") . . . then something remarkable suddenly came to pass. Something clashed, stamped, glittered—Vyazovnín felt in the right side of his breast the presence of some sort of a long cold stick. . . . He tried to push it away,

to say: "I don't want it!" but he was already lying on his back and experiencing a strange, almost absurd sensation: as though they were trying to extract teeth all over his body. . . . Then the earth softly slipped away from under him. . . The first voice said: "*Tout s'est passé dans les règles, n'est ce pas, messieurs?*"—The second voice answered: "*O, parfaitement!*" And bang! everything round about flew away, and sank away. . . . "Vyérotchka!" Vyazovnín had barely managed to think dimly.

Toward evening, "the devoted young fellow" carried him to the Hôtel des Trois Monarques—and during the night he expired. Vyazovnín had set out for that bourne whence no traveller has ever returned. He did not recover his consciousness before death, and only stammered a couple of times: "I shall return directly . . . . this is nothing . . . . now to the country. . . ." The Russian priest, for whom the landlord sent, reported the whole affair to our Embassy—and "the unfortunate affair with the Russian traveller"—got into all the newspapers in a couple of days.

Painful and bitter was it for Piótr Vasílitch to communicate to Vyérotchka her husband's letter; but when the news of Vyazovnín's death reached him, he lost his head completely. The first person to read about it in the newspapers was Mi-

khéi Mikhéitch, and he immediately galloped off to Piótr Vasílitch, in company with Onúfry Ílitch, with whom he had succeeded in making up. As was to have been expected, he began to shout while he was still in the anteroom: "Just fancy, what a calamity!" and so forth. Piótr Vasílitch would not believe him for a long time; but when doubt was no longer possible, he betook himself to Vyérotchka, after waiting a whole day. His mere aspect—crushed, annihilated—alarmed her to such a degree that she could hardly stand upright. He tried to prepare her for the fatal news, but his strength failed him—he sat down, and stammered through his tears:

"He is dead, dead. . . ."

A YEAR passed. Fresh sprouts spring from the stump of the felled tree; even the deepest wound heals over; life also replaces death, just as it is replaced by it,—and Vyérotchka's heart was somewhat rested and had recovered life.

Moreover, Vyazovnín did not belong to the category of those people who cannot be replaced (and are there any such people?)—neither was Vyérotchka capable of devoting herself forever to feelings (are there any such feelings?). She had married Vyazovnín without compulsion and without enthusiasm; she had been faithful and de-

voted to him; but she had not surrendered herself wholly to him; she mourned him sincerely, but not madly . . . . what more could be required? Piótr Vasílitch did not cease to visit her; as of yore, he was her closest friend, and therefore it is not in the least surprising that, on being left alone with her one day, he looked into her face and very calmly proposed that she should become his wife. . . . She smiled in reply, and gave him her hand. Their life after the wedding flowed on precisely as before: there was no necessity for making any change.

About ten years have elapsed since that time. Old Barsukóff lives with them, and as he never goes a step away from his grandchildren,—he has three already, two little girls and one boy,—he grows younger every year. He even talks with them, especially with his pet grandson, a curly-haired, black-eyed urchin, named Stepán in honour of him. The little rogue is perfectly well aware that his grandfather adores him, and, in consequence of this, he permits himself to mimic his way of walking about the room and exclaiming: "Brau, brau!" This prank always creates great mirth in the whole household.

Poor Vyazovnín is not forgotten to this day. Piótr Vasílitch reveres his memory, always refers to him with special emotion, and on every convenient occasion never fails to say that the deceased loved this or that, that he had such or such

a habit. Piótr Vasílitch, his wife, and all the members of his household pass their time in a very monotonous manner—peaceably and quietly; they enjoy happiness . . . . because there is no other happiness on earth.

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